

# PLAIN-DEALING;

OR,

## A PRECEDENT OF HONESTY.

---

*Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.*—GEN. XXV. 27.

THE world (I take it in Paul's sense, Rom. xii. 2) is grown at once deformed and subtle. And as it is commonly seen that misshapen trunks are houses of the sharpest wits,—as it was said of the Emperor Galba, *Ingenium Galbæ malè habitat*, because he had an acute wit with an uncomely body, nature recompensing her defection one way with perfection another way,—so the world is become ill-favoured and shrewd-pated, as politic in brain as it is stigmatic in limbs. Honesty, though it be elder than fraud, yet hath lost the privilege in men's estimation: it may keep the priority, the superiority is gone; and it must be fain to serve the younger.

Plain-dealing was held a good citizen, a good townsman: but Double-dealing, since he came blustering in, hath thrust him *sedibus, œdibus*, out of house and home; out of repute among men, out of succour of friends; out of commons, and almost out of canons; out of his house in the town and seat in the church.

I will therefore call back antiquity, and present to your eyes the purity of the primitive times. For I may say with Tertullian, *Perfectiona prima*; the nearer the spring-head, the purer streams. Men, *quo minus ab ortu aberant*, might more perfectly discern and more constantly follow the truth. Jacob is our exemplar and pattern of plain-dealing. He 'was a plain man, dwelling in tents.'

JACOB, taken in the proper sense, signifieth to supplant. Indeed Esau abuseth it, Gen. xxvii. 36, 'Is he not rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing.' But Jacob did not steal away his birthright, but only took the advantage to buy what careless Esau was willing to sell. And having the birthright, the blessing did justly belong to him; for the birthright and the blessing were not to be separated. But this name was a prediction of that fell out afterwards, for Jacob indeed supplanted and overthrew his brother.

The character gives him 'a plain man, dwelling in tents.' This is a manifest description of Jacob's conversation and of his profession.

For his life, he was a plain-dealing man; simple and without fraud. Though some antithetically oppose it to Esau's roughness: that Esau was a hairy man, but Jacob was plain and smooth, without any semblance to his brother's ruggedness. We deny not that Jacob was so; that exposition is true, but not enough. It falls short of that praise which God's Spirit here means him. 'He was a plain man,' without craft or subtlety.

For his delight and profession, he 'dwelt in tents;' which, though the Hebrews expound of frequenting the tents of Shem and Heber for knowledge, is indeed only a description of such as live in the fields and employ themselves about cattle; and this we frequently find to be Jacob's desire and practice. The good patriarchs were plain men,—plain in their clothes, no seas crossed for strange stuffs and fashions,—plain in their houses, which were mere tents, not gorgeous parlours without hospitality,—plain in their diet, as Jacob here, that fed on lentil-pottage.

But having thus proposed Jacob for a precedent of plain-dealing, it is primarily necessary to prove him clearly so; otherwise, the original being faulty, there can hardly be taken a good copy out of it. There are exceptions made against Jacob's plainness, and that in regard of his dealing both with his own brother Esau and with his father-in-law Laban.

I will briefly examine either, and how far he may be justified. In regard of Esau, it is objected that he strove against him before, at, and after his birth.

BEFORE.—It is said, ver. 22, 'The children struggled together within their mother's womb.' Never brothers began so early a litigation. These two were the champions of two mighty nations, successively to be derived from their loins; and they begin this opposition in a duel or single combat, when the field was their mother's womb—the quarrel, precedency and chiefdom.

This was not a pleasant and merry contention, as some would read it. Ambrose, Hierom, Augustine, so give it: *exultare, gestire, ludere*,—to leap, skip, or play. But it was an earnest struggling, as we translate it; the word signifying to beat, hurt, or bruise one another.

It was not a natural strife or ordinary motion. Aristotle affirms that male twins do strive in the right side upon the fortieth day, and females in the left on the ninetieth day. But by Aristotle's leave, what woman, except Rebekah, ever complained of so strange and early a contention? Nature was not here alone, if at least she was here at all.

Nor yet was this struggling voluntary and considerate. They did not strive *scientia certandi*, with a knowledge capable of what they did, or with any skill of wrestling. No, it was extraordinary, moved by a higher cause, not without the presage and signification of a great effect. It portended the future concertation of two great people. Neither if it had been pleasant, natural, or usual, would Rebekah have been so strangely affected or troubled with it as to cry out, 'Why am I thus?' or to solicit God by prayer to know what it meant.

And is it any wonder that Jacob and Esau wrestle in their mother's womb, when their seed, especially after a spiritual signification, must for ever wrestle in the world? Shall the womb of the church on earth be ever free from carnal professors mingled with holy? And is it possible these should live together in perfect peace, that are of so contrary natures? The wolf shall sooner dwell with the lamb, and the leopard play with the untroubled kid, and children sit unstung at the holes of asps. The sons of Belial will not

let the sons of God live in quiet ; that enmity which was once put between the seed of the woman and of the serpent will not so easily be reconciled. Indeed the seed of Esau is the greater, but they serve the less. They are more in number, stronger in power ; yet cannot extend it further than the permitting hand of Heaven wills it. And even whiles they do persecute the righteous, *quibus nocere volunt, prosunt plurimum, sibi autem ipsi maxime nocent*,—they hurt only themselves, and benefit those to whom they intended nothing less. They are our apothecaries, to minister us bitter pills, but so that they cannot put in one ingredient more than the Lord allows them.

Origen draws from this a mystical sense, and understands these two combatants to be within us ; as if it had presignified what Paul affirmeth, Gal. v. 17, 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other.' Rebekah may well thus figure the state of a regenerate soul, wherein till 'this mortal shall put on immortality,' and glory swallow up corruption, there must be a perpetual conflict. In men unconverted on earth, in saints glorified in heaven, there is no such unquietness : the former being without a Jacob, the latter without an Esau ; these having no flesh, the other nothing but flesh. But in men called and justified by the blood of Christ, yet in a militant estate, there is a necessity of this combat. No strife, no Christian. Before sanctification there is all peace in the soul. How should there choose, when there is no enemy to resist ? The unregenerate heart hath only an Esau in it ; what strife can there be without a Jacob ? Nature can very easily agree with itself. Disturbance is a sign of sanctification ; there is no grace where there is all peace. No sooner is the new man formed in us, but suddenly begins this quarrel. The remaining corruption will fight with grace, and too often prevail against it. Indeed it hath lost the dominion, but not the opposition ; the sovereignty, not the subtlety ; it will dwell, though it cannot reign, Rom. vii. Never any Rebekah was so happy as to conceive none but a Jacob ; Esau, the flesh, will be there also, to give trial and exercise. If grace alone sat in the heart, the hopeless devil would forbear his tentations ; he knows he hath a friend in our house that will be ready to let him in. So long as there is a Judas with Christ, he will not despair of betraying him. It is our corruption he works upon : if it were not for this Esau, he would not proffer assault. We see our combat, let us fight and conquer. Our flesh is the elder brother, grace is born after nature ; but when this Jacob comes, he will get the superiority : 'The elder shall serve the younger.' This strife begins betimes ; there is no Israelite but must be content to commence this war with his being. Regeneration and contention salute us at once ; we cannot enter our names into Christ's muster-book but we must fight. Let the secure worldling live at his cowardly ease, we must look for a skirmish. Herein stands our comfort, 'We shall be more than conquerors, through him that loved us,' Rom. viii. 37.

AT HIS BIRTH.—The strife is not ended at once, but continues, or rather is renewed at the birth : 'Afterward came his brother out, and his hand held Esau by the heel.' Lest Esau should outrun his brother into the world, Jacob catcheth fast hold of his heel. So that though Esau's body have the primogeniture, yet Jacob's hand was born before his heel. Razi hath a conceit, that though Esau was first born, yet Jacob was first conceived, and therefore the birthright did of right belong unto him. But it is without question that Esau had the start of nature, though Jacob of grace ; and therefore Jacob holds him by the heel, as if he would stay him from possess-

ing that privilege which nature (God afterwards disposing otherwise) bestowed on him.

AFTER THE BIRTH.—And herein there are two impeachments laid to Jacob's plain-dealing. He is accused with fraudulent stratagems concerning the birthright and concerning the blessing.

*For the birthright.*—Esau is by some few minutes the elder, and that was enough to give him just title to the birthright. That Jacob therefore might have the better claim to it, he buys that which he could not win, and by an honest art redeems the losses of nature. But this action smells of cunning, and seems to mar the credit of his plain-dealing.

1. Jacob is accused for cruel and uncharitable dealing with his brother. Esau comes hungry from the field; he is ready to die for want of sustenance; he sees his brother, in no such exigent, with food in his hand; he breaks forth into an earnest complaint, entreating his commiseration. Now, shall a brother deny relief to his brother, being ready to die, except upon such intolerable conditions? Sure it could be no less than a hard measure to take such advantage of a brother's necessity. But it is answered, that there could not be any such necessity of Esau's coveting Jacob's pottage, for there was, if not lentil-pottage, store of as good meat in the house, able to have given satisfaction to his hunger, and ready enough at his request, being the elder son. It was not, then, distressed neediness, but insatiate greediness. And it is not unfit that the luxurious appetite should pay for his folly.

2. But Jacob cannot be excused of covetousness, that would set no lower a price on his pottage than the birthright; which comprehended many privileges,—priority, government of the brethren, a double portion to the rest, the priesthood and right to sacrifice, and, what yet further commended it, a type and figure of everlasting life. And will Jacob require such a birthright, including all these privileges, for a mess of pottage? What tyrant could set such an impost on a merchandise? what citizen such a price on his engrossed commodities? Here was an exaction beyond the taxing of Tiberius. We answer, not as the Hebrews conceit, that Jacob afterwards gave a greater sum, and paid this but as an earnest, the Scripture neither expressing directly nor inferring by consequence any such matter; but we say that Jacob, by the instruction of his mother, knew that the birthright did justly belong to him, by the preordination of God, therefore now wisely taketh this opportunity to recover that to himself whereof his brother was but an usurper. For though Esau could plead the right of nature, Jacob could the right of grace, and he knew this would at last prevail. Neither yet must this particular fact of Jacob be drawn into a general imitation. His warrant was divine revelation, the silence whereof in these days sends us for direction to the written truth, 'to the law, to the testimony,' Isa. viii. 20: let this resolve and instruct thee.

3. But this birthright was a holy thing, and therefore the Apostle calls him a profane person, Heb. xii. 16, for selling it. Now there is no profaneness in selling a thing not sacred. But if sanctified things cannot be sold without sin, can they be bought without sin? Did not Jacob offend as much in the one as Esau in the other? It is well answered, that Jacob *intelligi potest suam redemisse vexationem*,—he did but buy his own vexation. He buys not simply a thing whereunto he had no right, but only taketh this occasion to recover his own; whereof the appointment of God had made him a possible, yea, certainly, future proprietary. It was never held simony for a spiritual man to buy his own peace. Many things are detained from the clergy unjustly, which God's law hath made sacred and theirs. They may,

therefore, without touch of simoniacal dealing, redeem their own quietness, and purchase a peaceable possession. I say not that any man may buy a spiritual endowment before he hath it; but when he hath it in right, he may purchase his own peaceful and quiet enjoying it. All that can be said is this, Esau preferred his belly before his birthright; Jacob his birthright before his belly. The one sold spiritual things for temporal; the other with temporal things bought spiritual.

And who will not part with transient benefits for eternal blessings? If either by suit, or strife, or purchase we can attain heaven, we are happy. For suit; there is no hour unseasonable, no prayer unwelcome, no importunity troublesome. The unjust judge could give relief to the importunate widow, Luke xviii. 5; and shall not our just God give ear and ease to our incessant plaints? Spare to speak and spare to speed; the timorous requester teacheth the invocated a denial. For strife; we know who taught us, that 'the kingdom of heaven suffers violence,' and must be attained by a holy kind of force. Jacob must wrestle for the blessing before he hath it; and so wrestling he shall have it, though he be sent halting to his grave. The Lord knows our strength, yet he loves our violence and importunity; and therefore hath so conditioned the gate of heaven, that without our striving we must not look to enter it. For purchase; had a far higher rate been set on the birthright, Jacob would not have grudged to give it. He hath too much of the blood of Esau in him that will not forego all the world rather than the birthright. The wise merchant, when he knew the field wherein lay that hidden treasure, sold all he had to buy it. He is a besotted cosmopolite that refuseth to purchase such spiritual friends by his riches as may procure him a place in the celestial habitations, Luke xvi. 9. Grudge not him a portion of thy temporal wealth that is able to minister everlasting comfort to thy conscience. Thou art no loser, if thou mayest exchange earth for heaven.

*For the blessing.*—What hath secure Esau lost, if having sold the birthright he may reserve the blessing? Behold, of this he assureth himself: his father hath sent him for venison, that 'his soul might bless him,' Gen. xxvii. 4. To hunting he is gone in haste; meaning to recover that again by his own venison which he had lost by his brother's pottage. Isaac being now blind in his eyes, but yet blinder in his affections, forgetting what decree and sentence God had formerly passed of his two sons, for some temporal regard doth favour Esau, and intends to bequeath unto him that spiritual and happy legacy of the blessing. God had said that 'the elder shall serve the younger;' yet forgetful Isaac purposeth to bless his first-born, Esau. How easy is it even for a saint to be transported with natural affections! He could not but remember that himself, though the younger, was preferred to his elder brother, Ishmael; he knew that God's command prevailed with his father Abraham above nature, when he bound him for a sacrifice. He saw Esau lewdly matched with the daughters of heathens: yet he will now think on nothing but, Esau is my first-born; and, if it be possible, he will pour the benediction upon a wrong head.

But God is often better to us than we would, and with his preventing grace stops the precipitation of erring nature. So sweet is the ordination of the divine providence, that we shall not do what we would, but what we ought; and by deceiving us, turns our purposed evil into eventual good. We are made to do that good which we not intended. God hath ordained the superiority to the younger; he will therefore contrive for him the blessing. Whatsoever Isaac affected, this God will have effected.

To bring the Lord's will to pass there never wanted means. Sinful man may have his hand in this; the just decree of God stands untouched. He determined the death of his Son, without favour to their guilt that murdered him. The affections of parents are here divided: Isaac loves Esau, and Rebekah Jacob; this difference shall make way to the fulfilling of the promise. Neither parent neglected either son; but Rebekah remembered the Lord's purpose better than Isaac. Neither is it enough what Ambrose hereon saith: *Mater affectum, pater judicium indicat; mater circa minorem tenera pietate propendit, pater circa seniore naturæ honorificentiam servat*,—The mother shews affection, the father judgment: she tenderly loves the younger, he gives the honour of nature to the elder. Nay, rather, the mother shews judgment, and the father affection. For what was Jacob to Rebekah more than Esau? Or why should she not rather love her first-born? It is God that inclines the mother's love to the younger against nature, because the father affects the elder against the promise. Hereupon she will rather deceive her own husband, than he shall deceive his own chosen son of the decreed blessing. The wife will be subtle when the husband is partial; her honest fraud shall answer his forgetful indulgence. Isaac would turn Esau into Jacob; Rebekah doth turn Jacob into Esau.

The discourse or contemplation of the provident mother and her happy son's passages in this action, I find set down by so divine and accurate a pen, that, despairing of any tolerable imitation, I shall, without distaste to the reader or imputation to myself, deliver it in his own express words:—'Rebekah, presuming upon the oracle of God, and her husband's simplicity, dares be Jacob's surety for the danger, his counsellor for the carriage of the business, his cook for the diet; yea, dresses both the meat and the man. And now puts dishes into his hand, words into his mouth, the garments on his back, the goat's hair upon the open parts of his body, and sends him in thus furnished for the blessing; standing no doubt at the door to see how well her lesson was learned, how well her device succeeded. And if old Isaac should by any of his senses have discerned the guile, she had soon stept in and undertaken the blame, and urged him with that known will of God concerning Jacob's dominion and Esau's servitude, which either age or affection had made him forget. And now she wisheth that she could borrow Esau's tongue as well as his garments, that she might securely deceive all the senses of him which had suffered himself more dangerously deceived with his affection. But this is past her remedy; her son must name himself Esau with the voice of Jacob.'\*

We see the proceeding: it is now examinable whether this doth not somewhat impeach the credit of Jacob's plain-dealing. There have been undertakers of Jacob's justification, or at least excusation, in this fact. Let us hear what they say:—1. Gregory thus excuseth it: that Jacob did not steal the blessing by fraud, but *sibi debitam accepit*, took it as a due to himself, in respect that the primogeniture was formerly devolved to him. The truth is, he that owned the birthright might justly challenge the blessing. But this doth not wholly excuse the fact. 2. Chrysostom thus mitigates it: that *non studio nocendi contexit fraudem*,—he did not deceive with a mind to hurt, but only in respect of the promise of God. But this is not sufficient; for there was an intention of hurt, both to Isaac in deceiving him, and to Esau in depriving him of the blessing. But whatsoever may be pleaded for the defence of Jacob's dissimulation in outward gesture, there is no apology for

\* Bishop Hall, Contemp.—Besides this acknowledged extract, the author in this sermon borrows many sentences and expressions from Bishop Hall.—Ed.

the words of his tongue. The meaning of the speech is in the speaker; therefore his tongue cannot be guiltless when it goes against his conscious heart; but the meaning of the gesture is in the interpreter, who gives it a voluntary construction. Gesture is more easily ruled than speech; and it is hard if the tongue will not blab what a man is, in spite of his habit. Isaac's eyes might be deceived, they were dim; his hands, by the roughness of the garments; his nostrils, by the smell of them; his palate, by the savour of the meat. All these senses yield affiance; what then shall drive Isaac to a suspicion or incredulity? None but this, the ear sticks at the judgment; that says, 'The voice is the voice of Jacob.' To help forward this deceit, three lies are tumbled out, one in the neck of another:—(1.) 'I am Esau thy first-born;' (2.) 'I have done as thou badest me;' (3.) 'Eat of my venison.' To clear him of this sin of lying hath been more peremptorily undertaken than soundly performed.

1. Chrysostom, with divers others, think that though he did lie, he did not sin, because he did it by the revelation and counsel of God. So that God, willing to have the prediction fulfilled, dispensing and disposing all things, is brought in as the preordainer of Jacob's lie, that I say not the patron. But not without derogation to his divine justice. For, (1.) it appears not that this was the counsel of God, but only Rebekah's device: Ver. 8, 'Hear my voice, my son, in that which I command thee.' 'My voice,' not God's; 'what I command,' not what God approves. (2.) If Jacob had received any oraculous warrant for this project, he would not have had so doubtful an opinion of the success. The matter was foreseen of God, not allowed; for God never inspireth lies. God's wise disposition of this means affords no warrant of his approbation. He ordereth many things which he ordained not. The means were so unlawful that Jacob himself doth more distrust their success than hope for their blessing. He knew that good Isaac, being so plain-hearted himself, would severely punish deceit in his son. Men in office truly honest are the sorest enemies to fraudulent courses in others. He therefore carries his meat in trembling hands, and scarce dares hope that God will bless such a subtlety with good event. Yet he did; but how? Here was prodigal dissembling: a dissembled person, a dissembled name, dissembled venison, dissembling answer; yet behold a true blessing, to the man, not to the means. Thus God may work his own will out of our infirmities; yet without approval of our weakness, or wronging the integrity of his own goodness.

2. Some have confessed it a lie, but a guiltless lie, by reason of a necessity imagined in this exigent; as if God could not have wrought Isaac's heart to bless Jacob in this short interim, whiles Esau was gone a-hunting for venison. Origen says, that necessity may urge a man to use a lie as sauce to his meat; another, as physicians use hellebore. But that which is simply evil can by no apology be made good. *Causa patrocinio non bona, peior erit.*

3. Some take from it all imputation of a lie, and directly justify it. Augustine\* thinks Jacob spoke mystically, and that it is to be referred to Jacob's body, not to Jacob's person; to the Christian church, that should take away the birthright from the elder. But we may better receive that Jacob fell into an infirmity than the colour of an allegory. Neither doth the success justify the means, as some philosophers have delivered, that *prosperum scelus vocatur virtus*,—lucky wickedness merits the name of goodness. But Jacob's one act of falsehood shall not disparage wholly that simplicity the Scripture gives him; he was 'a plain man.' To be unjust condemns

\* Hom. xxxv. in Genes.

a man, not the doing of one singular act unjustly ; therefore God casts not off Jacob for this one infirmity, but makes use of this infirmity to serve his own purpose. If Esau's and Jacob's works be weighed together in a balance, one would think the more solid virtue to be in Esau's.

Esau obeyeth his father's will, painfully hunts venison, carefully prepares it ; here is nothing but praiseworthy. Jacob dissembles, offers kid's flesh for venison, counterfeits Esau, beguiles his father ; here is all blameworthy. I will not hereon speak as a poet,—

‘Committunt eadem diverso crimina fato,  
Ille crucem, sceleris pretium tulit, hic diadema,’—

but infer with the Apostle, Rom. ix. 11, the purpose of God shall remain by election, which standeth not in works, but in grace. Therefore, howsoever Jacob got the blessing against Isaac's will, yet once given, it stood ; neither did the father recant this act as an error, but saw in it the mercy of God, that prevented him of an error. So, ver. 33, ‘I have blessed him, therefore he shall be blessed.’ When afterwards Esau came in, Isaac trembled ; his heart told him that he should not have intended the blessing where he did, and that it was due to him unto whom it was given, not intended. He saw now that he had performed unwilling justice, and executed God's purpose against his own. He rather cries mercy for wrong intending than thinks of reversing it.

Yet then may Jacob stand for our precedent of plain-dealing, notwithstanding this particular weakness. Who hath not oftener erred, without the loss of his honest reputation ? Not that this fact should embolden an imitation ; let us not tell Jacob's lie to get Jacob's blessing. It would be presumption in us, what was in him infirmity ; and God, that pardoned his weakness, would curse our obstinateness.

There is yet one cavil more against Jacob's integrity, concerning Laban, about the particoloured sheep ; whether it were a fault in Jacob by the device of the pilld and straked rods to enrich himself. The answer is threefold :—

1. This was by the direction of God, Gen. xxxi. 11, who, being an infinite and illimited Lord, hath an absolute power to transfer the right of things from one to another ; as he might justly give the land of Canaan to the Israelites from the usurping Canaanites.

2. Jacob apprehends this means to recover his own, due unto him by a double right :—First, as the wages of twenty years' service, Gen. xxxi. 7, yet unpaid. Secondly, as the dowry for his wives, Gen. xxxi. 15, whom miserable Laban had thrust upon him without any competent portion. Thirdly, especially God's warrant concurring, it was lawful for him to recover that by policy which was detained from him by injury. So did the Israelites borrow of the Egyptians their best goods, jewels, and ornaments, and bore them away as a just recompense of their long service.

3. Lastly, he is quitted by that saying, *Volenti non fit injuria*. Laban sees that he was well blessed by Jacob's service ; the increasing his flocks makes him loath to part. But Jacob hath served long enough for a dead pay ; somewhat he must have, or be gone. His hard uncle bids him ask a hire ; you know Jacob's demand. Laban readily promotes this bargain ; which at last made his son-in-law rich, and himself envious. So saith Calvin, *Tractatus est pro suo ingenio* ; Laban is handled in his kind. He thought by this means to have multiplied his own flocks ; but those few spotted sheep and goats, upon this covenant, as if they had been weary of their old owner, alter their fashion, and run their best young into particolours, changing at



once their colour and their master. So that this means which Jacob used was not fraudulent or artificial, but natural; not depending upon man's wit, but God's blessing, who, considering his tedious and painful service, pays him good wages out of his uncle's folds. For fourteen years the Lord hath for Jacob enriched Laban; therefore for these last six he will out of Laban enrich Jacob. And if the uncle's flock be the greater, the nephew's shall be the better. Most justly then is Jacob cleared from injustice; and no aspersion of fraud with Laban can be cast to discredit his plain-dealing.

HE DWELT IN TENTS.—Two things are observable in the holy patriarchs, and commendable to all that will be heirs with them of eternal life.

1. Their contempt of the world. They that dwell in tents intend not a long dwelling in a place. They are moveables, ever ready to be transferred at the occasion and will of the inhabiter. Heb. xi. 9, 'Abraham dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.' The reason is added, 'for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' These saints studied not to enlarge their barns, as the rich cosmopolite, Luke xii., or to sing requiems to their souls, in the hoped perpetuity of earthly habitations. 'Soul, live; thou hast enough laid up for many years.' Fool! he had not enough for that night. They had no thought that their houses should continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; thereupon calling their lands after their own names, Ps. xlix.

11. God convinceth the foolish security of the Jews, to whom he had promised (by the Messiah to be purchased) an everlasting royalty in heaven, by the Rechabites, Jer. xxxv. 7, who built no houses, but dwelt in tents, as if they were strangers, ready on a short warning for removal. The church esteems heaven her home, this world but a tent, a tent which we must all leave, build we as high as Babel, as strong as Babylon. When we have fortified, combined, feasted, death comes with a voider, and takes away all. 'Dost thou think to reign securely, because thou closest thyself in cedar?' Jer. xxii. 15. Friends must part: Jonah and his gourd, Nebuchadnezzar and his palace, the covetous churl and his barns. 'Arise, and depart, for this is not your rest,' Micah. ii. 10. Though you depart with grief from orchards full of fruits, grounds full stocked, houses dightly furnished, purses richly stuffed, from music, wine, junkets, sports; yet go, you must go, every man to his own home. He that hath seen heaven with the eye of faith, through the glass of the Scripture, slips off his coat with Joseph, and springs away. They that lived thrice our age yet dwelt in tents as pilgrims that did not own this world. The shortness and weakness of our days strengthens our reasons to vilipend it. The world is the field, thy body the tent, heaven thy freehold. The world is full of troubles; winds of persecutions, storms of menaces, cold of uncharitableness, heat of malice, exhalations of prodigious terrors, will annoy thee. Love it not, 1 John ii. 15. Who can affect his own vexations? It is thy thoroughfare; God loves thee better than to let it be thy home. Every misery on earth should turn our love to heaven. God gives this world bitter teats, that we might not suck too long on it. Satan, as some do with rotten nutmegs, gilds it over, and sends it his friends for a token. But when they put that spice into their broth, it infects their hearts. Set thy affections on heaven, where thou shalt abide for ever. This life is a tent, that a mansion: 'In my Father's house there are many mansions,' John xiv. 2. This casual, that firm; 'a kingdom that cannot be shaken,' Heb. xii. This troublesome, that full of rest. This assuredly short, that eternal. Happy is he that here esteems himself a pilgrim in a tent, that he may be hereafter a citizen in a stable kingdom!

2. Their frugality should not pass unregarded. Here is no ambition of great buildings; a tent will serve. How differ our days and hearts from those! The fashion is now to build great houses to our lands, till we leave no lands to our houses; and the credit of a good house is made, not to consist in inward hospitality, but in outward walls. These punkish outsides beguile the needy traveller: he thinks there cannot be so many rooms in a house, and never a one to harbour a poor stranger; or that from such a multitude of chimneys no meat should be sent to the gates. Such a house is like a painted whore; it hath a fair cheek, but rotten lungs; no breath of charity comes out of it. We say, *frustra fit per plura, quod fieri potest per pauciora*. What needs a house, and more rooms, than there is use for? A less house, and more hospitableness, would do a great deal better. Are not many of these glorious buildings set up in the curse of Jericho? the foundation laid in the blood of the eldest, the poor; the walls reared in the blood of the youngest, the ruin of their own posterity? This was one of the travellers-observed faults in England, *camini mali*; that we had ill clocks, and worse chimneys, for they smoked no charity.

We see the precedent: the application must teach us to deal plainly. Here is commended to us plainness in *meaning* and in *demeaning*, which instructs us to a double concord and agreement,—in meaning, betwixt the heart and the tongue; in demeaning, betwixt the tongue and the hand.

In *meaning*, there should be a loving and friendly agreement between the heart and the tongue. This is the mind's herald, and should only proclaim the sender's message. If the tongue be an ill servant to the heart, the heart will be an ill master to the tongue, and Satan to both. There are three kinds of dissimulation held tolerable, if not commendable; and beyond them, none without sin:—

1. When a man dissembles to get himself out of danger, without any prejudice to another. So David feigned himself mad, to escape with life, 1 Sam. xxi. So the good physician may deceive his patient, by stealing upon him a potion which he abhorreth, intending his recovery.

2. When dissimulation is directly aimed to the instruction and benefit of another. So Joseph caused the money to be put in his brethren's sacks, thereby to work in them a knowledge of themselves. So Christ, going to Emmaus with the two disciples, made as if he would go further, to try their humanity, Luke xxiv.

3. When some common service is thereby performed to the good of the church. Such are those stratagems and policies of war, that carry in them a direct intention of honesty and justice, though of hostility; as Joshua's, whereby he discomfited the men of Ai, Josh. viii.

Further than these limits no true Israelite, no plain-dealing man must venture. Plato was of opinion that it was lawful for magistrates, *hostium vel civium causa mentiri*, to lie, either to deceive an enemy, or save a citizen.\* I might against Plato set Aristotle, who saith expressly that 'a lie in itself is evil and wicked.† And another philosopher was wont to say, that in two things a man was like unto God, in bestowing benefits, and telling the truth.‡ Nor will we infer with Lyranus, because there is a title in the civil law, *De dolo malo*, of evil craft, that therefore it is granted there is a craft not evil. But let us know, to the terror of liars, that the devil is the father of lying; and 'when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own,' John viii. 44. And beyond exception they are the words of everlasting verity, 'No lie is of the truth,' 1 John ii. 21. Therefore, into that heavenly Jerusalem shall enter none that

\* Lib. iii. de Rep.

† Ethic., l. iv., c. 7.

‡ Pythag. ex Ælian, lib. xii.

works abomination, or maketh a lie, Rev. xxi. 27. A lie must needs be contrary to the rule of grace, for it is contrary to the order of nature, which hath given a man voice and words to express the meaning of the heart. As in setting instruments, they refer all to one tune, so the heart is the ground which all our instruments should go by. If there were no God to search the heart, he were a fool that would not dissemble; since there is, he is a fool that doth. Therefore Job excellently, 'All the while my breath is in me, and the Spirit of God is in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit,' chap. xxvii. 3. The sweetest Psalmist insinuates no less: 'My heart is itching a good matter; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer,' Ps. xlv. 1. When the heart is a good secretary, the tongue is a good pen; but when the heart is a hollow bell, the tongue is a loud and a lewd clapper. Those undefiled virgins, admitted to follow the Lamb, have this praise, 'In their mouth was found no guile,' Rev. xiv. 5.

In *demeaning*, which is the good harmony betwixt the tongue and the hand. The righteous man, to whom God's celestial tabernacle is promised, 'speaketh the truth in his heart;' and when he hath sworn, though to his own hurt, he changeth not, Ps. xv. 4. The paucity of these men makes the church of God so thin of saints, and the world so full of dissemblers. As the tongue must not speak false, so the hand must not do unjustly: injustice is the greatest dissimulation. We live under Libra, justice and equity: who knows whether the nights or the days pass over his head more happily? We fear not Taurus the bull, that shoots his horns from Rome; nor Scorpio, that sends his venomous sting from Spain; nor the unchristened Aries of infidels, profane and professed enemies to engine and batter our walls; if the Sagittarius of heresy do not wound us in the reins, nor the Gemini of double-dealing circumvent us in our lives. The world is full of tricks. We will not do what we ought, yet defend what we do. How many spend their wits to justify their hands! Through the unlucky and unnatural copulation of fraud and malice was that monstrous stigmatic, equivocation, engendered: a damned egg, not covered by any fair bird, but hatched, as poets feign of ospreys, with a thunder-clap.

I will now only seek to win you to plain-dealing by the benefits it brings: the success to God:—

1. The principal is to please God, whose displeasure against double-dealing the sad examples of Saul for the Amalekites, of Gehazi for the bribes, of Ananias for the inheritance, testify in their destruction. Whose delight in plain-dealing himself affirms: 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!' John i. 17.

2. The credit of a good name, which is a most worthy treasure, is thus preserved. The riches left thee by thy ancestors may miscarry through others' negligence; the name not, save by thy own fault. It is the plain-dealer's reward, his name shall be had in estimation; whereas no faith is given to the dissembler, even speaking truth. Every man is more ready to trust the poor plain-dealer than the glittering false-tongued gallant.

3. It prevents and infatuates all the malicious plots of enemies. God, in regard to thy simplicity, brings to nought all their machinations. Thou, O Lord, hadst respect to my simple pureness. An innocent fool takes fearless steps, and walks as securely as if it stood girt with a wall of brass.

4. It preserves thy state from ruin. When by subtlety men think to scrape together much wealth, all is but the spider's web, artificial and weak. What plain-dealing gets, sticks by us, and infallibly derives itself to our posterity. Not only this man's own 'soul shall dwell at ease,' but also 'his

seed shall inherit the earth,' Pa. xxv. 13. Wicked men labour with hands and wits to undermine and undo many poor, and from their demolished heaps to erect themselves a great fortune; but God bloweth upon it a *non placet*; and then, as powder doth small shot, it scatters into the air, not without a great noise, and they are blown up. If thou wouldst be good to thyself and thine, use plainness

5. It shall somewhat keep thee from the troubles and vexations of the world. Others, when their double-dealing breaks out, are more troubled themselves than erst they troubled others; for shame waits at the heels of fraud. But 'blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,' Matt. v. 5.

6. The curses of the poor shall never hurt thee. Though the causeless curse shall never come, yet it is happy for a man so to live that all may bless him. Now the plain man shall have this at last. Gallant prodigality, like fire in flax, makes a great blaze, a hot show; but plain hospitality, like fire in solid wood, holds out to warm the poor, because God blesseth it. So I have seen hot-spurs in the way gallop amain; but the ivy-bushes have so stayed them, that the plain traveller comes first to his journey's end.

7. It shall be thy best comfort on thy death-bed: *conscientia bene peractæ vitæ*,—the conscience of an innocent life. On this staff leans aged Samuel: 'Whose ox or ass have I taken?' To whom have I by fraud or force done wrong? On this pillow doth sick Hezekiah lay his head: 'Remember, Lord, that I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight,' Isa. xxxviii. 3. So Job solaceth himself: 'My heart shall not condemn me for my days.' When no clogs of usury with their heavy pressures, nor folds of injustice with their troublesome vexations, disquiet our peace-desiring sides, or lie upon our consciences; when thou hast no need to say to thine heir, Restore this or that which I have fraudulently or unjustly taken away; you see how false the proverb was, Plain-dealing is a jewel, and he that useth it shall die a beggar. But it is well returned in the supplement, He that will not use it, shall die a dishonest man.

8. Lastly, thou shalt find rest for thy soul. Thou hast dealt plainly; so will God with thee, multiplying upon thee his promised mercies. If thou hadst been hollow, not holy, fraudulent, not plain, thy portion had been bitter, even with hypocrites. But now of a plain saint on earth, thou shalt become a glorious saint in heaven.