

A CONTEMPLATION OF THE HERBS.

For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God.—HEB. VI. 7.

THAT the herbs of our graces may be meet for the dresser,—contentful to God, who hath planted, watered, husbanded the garden of our hearts,—we will require in them four virtues:—1. Odour; 2. Taste; 3. Ornament; 4. Medicinal virtue.

1. That they have a good odour. God is delighted with the smell of our graces: 'My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies,' Cant. vi. 2. The virtues of Christ are thus principally pleasant; and all our herbs only smell sweetly in his garden: 'Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee,' Cant. i. 3. This savour is sweetly acceptable in the nostrils of God: 'All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia,' Ps. xlv. 8. It is his righteousness that gives all our herbs a good odour; and in him it pleaseth God to judge our works sweet. When Noah had built an altar, and sacrificed burnt-offerings on it, 'the Lord smelled a sweet savour, and said, I will not again curse the ground for man's sake,' Gen. viii. 21. Myrrh and frankincense were two of the oblations which the wise men offered to Christ being an infant, Matt. ii.

'Tres reges, regum Regi tria dona tulerunt;
Myrrham homini, uncto aurum, thura dedere Deo.
Tu tria fac itidem dones pia munera Christo,
Muneribus gratus si cupis esse tuis.
Pro myrrha lacrymas, pro auro cor porrigere purum,
Pro thure, ex humili pectore funde preces;'

'Three kings to the great King three offerings bring,
Incense for God, myrrh for man, gold for king.
Thy incense be the hands a white soul rears; *
For gold give a pure heart, for myrrh drop tears.'

The way to make our herbs smell sweetly is first to purge our garden of weeds. For if sin be fostered in our hearts, all our works will be abomi-

* Referring to the apostolic precept, 'lifting up holy hands,' 1 Tim. ii. 8.—Ed.

nated. God heareth not the prayers of the wicked: 'If ye will walk contrary to me,' saith the Lord, 'I will bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours,' Lev. xxvi. 31. But being adopted by grace in Christ, and sanctified to holiness, our good works smell sweetly: 'I have received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God,' Phil. iv. 18. It seems God highly esteems the herb charity in our gardens. He that serveth the Lord shall smell as Lebanon: 'He shall grow as the vine, and his scent shall be as the wine of Lebanon,' Hos. xiv. 6, 7.

Man is naturally delighted with pleasant savours, and abhors noisome and stinking smells. But our God hath purer nostrils, and cannot abide the polluted heaps of iniquities. The idle man is a standing pit, and hath an ill-savoured smell, an ill-favoured sight. The drunkard is like a bog, a fog, a fen of evil vapours; God cannot abide him. Your covetous wretch is like a dunghill; there is nothing but rottenness and infection in him. *Omnis malitia eructat fumum*,—All wickedness belcheth forth an evil savour. Wonder you, if God refuse to dwell with the usurer, swearer, idolater, adulterer? There is a poison of lust, a leprosy of putrefaction in them; no carrion is so odious to man as man's impieties are to God. Yea, the very oblations of defiled hands stink in his presence: 'He that sacrificeth a lamb is as if he cut off a dog's neck,' &c., Isa. lxvi. 3. As if *assafetida* was the only plant of their gardens. But good herbs give a double savour—one outward to man, another inward to God. The sweet smoke of a holy sacrifice, like a subtle air, riseth up to heaven; and is with God before man sees or smells it. It also cheers the hearts of Christians to behold Christian works. Reverence to the word, hallowing the Sabbaths, relieving the poor, deeds of mercy, pity, piety, give a delightful scent; solacing the souls of the saints, and pleasing him that made them both men and saints. Therefore, 'Hearken unto me, ye holy children, and bud forth as a rose growing by the brook of the field. Give ye a sweet savour, as frankincense, and flourish as a lily, send forth a smell, sing a song of praise, and bless the Lord in all his works,' Eccles. xxxix. 13.

2. That they taste well. Many a flower hath a sweet smell, but not so wholesome a taste. Your Pharisaical prayers and alms smelt sweetly in the vulgar nostrils; taste them, and they were but rue, or rather wormwood. When the Pharisee saw the publican in the lower part of the temple, standing, as it were, in the belfry, he could cry, Foh this publican! But when they were both tasted by his palate that could judge, the publican hath an herb in his bosom, and the Pharisee but a gay, gorgeous, stinking weed. The herbs that the passover was eaten with were sour; yet they were enjoined with sweet bread. Sour they might be, but they were wholesome. Herbs have not only their savour, but their nutriment: 'He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring food out of the earth,' Ps. civ. 14. Herbs then are food, and have an alimental virtue. So we may both with the herbs of charity feed men's bodies, and with the herbs of piety feed their souls. A good life is a good salad; and in the second place to precepts are usefully necessary good examples. The blood of martyrs is said to have nourished the church. The patience of the saints, in the hottest extremity of their afflictions, even when the flames of death have clipped them in their arms, have been no less than a kindly nourishment to many men's faith. It is expounded by a universal consent of divines that one of those three feedings, which Christ imposed on Peter, is *Pasce exemplo*: Let thy life feed them. Blessed gardens, that yield herbs, like

Jotham's vine, that 'cheer the heart both of God and man,' Judges ix. 13. The poets feigned that nectar and ambrosia were the food of their gods:—

'Jupiter ambrosia satur est, est nectare planus.'

But the true God's diet is the virtues of his saints, wherewith he promiseth to sup when he comes into their hearts, Rev. iii. 20. Faith, love, patience, meekness, honesty, these dishes are his dainties.

If thou wouldest make Christ good cheer in the parlour of thy conscience, bring him the herbs of obedience. Do not say, I would have been as kind and liberal to my Saviour as the best, had I lived in those days when he blessed the world with his bodily presence; but now I may say with Mary Magdalene, 'They have taken away the Lord, and I know not where to find him.' Damn not thyself with excuses. Wheresoever his church is, there is he: exercise thy piety. Wheresoever his members are, there is he: exercise thy charity. Thou art very niggardly if thou wilt not afford him a salad, a dinner of herbs. Yet, saith Solomon, 'A dinner of green herbs with love, is better than a fat ox with hatred.'

3. That they be fit to adorn. Herbs and flowers have not only their use in pleasing the nostrils and the palate, but the eye also. They give delight to all those three senses. Good works are the beauty of a house, and a better sight than fresh herbs strewed in the windows. The chamber where Christ would eat his passover was trimmed; and the palace of our princely Solomon 'is paved with love of the daughters of Jerusalem,' Cant. iii. 10.

There is no ornament in the world like good deeds; no hanging of tapestry or arras comes near it. A stately building where an idolater dwells is but a gaudy coat to a Sodom-apple. When you see an oppressor raising a great house from the ruins of many less, depopulating a country to make up one family, building his parlours with extortion, and cementing his walls with the mortar of blood, you say, There is a foul Minotaur in a fair labyrinth. Be a man dead, it is a foolish hope to rear immortality with a few senseless stones. Perhaps the passenger will be hereby occasioned to comment upon his bad life, and to discourse to his company the long enumeration of such a man's vices. So a perpetual succession of infamy answers his gay sepulchre; and it had been better for him to have been utterly inglorious than inexcusably infamous. The best report that can be drawn from him is but this: Here lies a fair tomb, and a foul carcase in it.

These things do neither honest a man living, nor honour him dead. Good works are the best ornaments, the most lasting monuments. They become the house wherein thy soul dwelleth, whiles it dwells there; and bless thy memory, when those two are parted. A good life is man's best monument, and that epitaph shall last as if it were written with a pen of iron and claw of a diamond, which is made up of virtuous actions. Good herbs beautify more than dead stones. Wheresoever thou shalt be buried, obscurity shall not swallow thee. Every good heart that knew thee is thy tomb; and every tongue writes happy epitaphs on thy memorial. Thus height up your souls with a treasure of good works. Let your herbs smell sweetly, let them taste cheerfully, let them adorn beautifully. So God's palate, his nostrils, his sight, shall be well pleased.

4. That they be medicinable, and serve not only as antidotes to prevent, but as medicaments to cure the soul's infirmities. The poor man's physic lies in his garden; the good soul can fetch an herb from his heart, of God's planting there, that can help him. Pliny writes of a certain herb, which he calls *thelygonum*; we in English, 'The grace of God.' A happy herb, and worthy to stand in the first place, as chief of the garden. For it is the prin-

cipal, and, as it were, the *genus* of all the rest. We may say of it, as some write of the *carduus benedictus*, or holy thistle, that it is *herba omni morbo*,—an herb of such virtue that it can cure all diseases. This may heal a man who is otherwise *nullis medicabilis herbis*. Wretched men, that are without this herb, the grace of God, in their gardens!

Hyssop, and Humility.—Is a man tempted to pride,—and that is a saucy sin, ever busy among good works, like a Judas among the apostles,—let him look into his garden for hyssop, humility of spirit. Of which herb it is written:—

‘Est humilis, petræque suis radicibus hæret.’

Let him be taught by this herb to annihilate his own worth, and to cleave to the Rock whereout he grows, and whereof he is upholden, Jesus Christ. Or let him produce the camomile, which smells the sweeter the more it is trodden on. Humility is a gracious herb, and allays the wrath of God; whereas pride provokes it. It is recorded of an English king, Edward the First, that being exceedingly angry with a servant of his, in the sport of hawking, he threatened him sharply. The gentleman answered, It was well there was a river between them. Hereat the king, more incensed, spurred his horse into the depth of the river, not without extreme danger of his life, the water being deep, and the banks too steep and high for his ascending. Yet at last recovering land, with his sword drawn, he pursues the servant, who rode as fast from him. But finding himself too ill-horsed to outride the angry king, he reined, lighted, and on his knees exposed his neck to the blow of the king's sword. The king no sooner saw this but he puts up his sword, and would not touch him. A dangerous water could not withhold him from violence; yet his servant's submission did soon pacify him. Whiles man flies stubbornly from God, he that ‘rides upon the wings of the wind’ posts after him with the sword of vengeance drawn. But when dust and ashes humbles himself, and stands to his mercy, the wrath of God is soon appeased.

This camomile or hyssop grows very low. Humbleness roots downward, yet no herb hath so high branches. We say, that proud men have high minds: they have not; for their minds only aspire to some earthly honours, which are but low shrubs indeed. The humble man aspires to heaven, and to be great in the eternal King's favour; and this is the true, but good height of mind. His desires have a high aim, though their dwelling be in the vale of a humble heart. There are engines that raise water to fall, that it may rise the higher. A lowly heart, by abasing itself in the sight of God and men, doth mount all the other graces of the soul as high as heaven, and the eye of mercy accepts them. Pride is a stinking weed; and though it be gay and garish, is but like the horse-flower. In the field, it is of glorious show: crop it, and you cannot endure the savour. At the best, the proud man is but like the bird of paradise or the ostrich: his feathers are more worth than his body. Let not thy garden be without this herb humility. It may be least respected with men, and among other herbs overlooked, but most acceptable to God. *Respexit humilitatem ancilla suæ*, sings the virgin Mary,—‘He had regard to the lowliness of his handmaiden.’ It shall not want a good remembrance, a good recompense. For the last, the least, and the lowest, may come to be the first, the greatest, and the highest. This is a necessary herb.

Bulapathum; the herb Patience.—Is a man, through multitudes of troubles, almost wrought to impatience, and to repine at the providence of

God, that disposeth no more ease? Let him fetch an herb out of the garden to cure this malady: *bulapathum*, the herb patience. The adamant serves not for all seas; but patience is good for all estates. God's purpose cannot be eluded with impatience, and man under his hand is like a bird in a net: the more he struggles, the faster he is. Impatience regards not the highest, but secondary causes; and so bites the stone instead of the thrower. If our inferior strike us, we treble revenge. If an equal, we requite it. If a superior, we repine not; or if we mutter, yet not utter our discontent. Think whose hand strikes: it is God's, whether by a pleurisy, or a fever, or a sword, or whatever other instrument. The blow was his, whatsoever was the weapon. And this wound will not be cured, unless by applying the herb patience.

The good man hath such a hand over fortune, knowing who guides and disposeth all events, that no miseries, though they be sudden as well as sharp, can unheart him. If he must die, he goes breast to breast with virtue. If his life must tarry a further succession of miseries, he makes absent joys present; wants, plentitudes; and beguiles calamity, as good company does the way, by patience. 'A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness,' 1 Kings xxii. 34. The man shot at random, or, as the Hebrew hath it, 'in his simplicity'; but God directed the arrow to strike Ahab. So David spake of Shimei: 'Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and requite me good for his cursing this day,' 2 Sam. xvi. 11. Consider we not so much how unjust man is that giveth the wrong, as how just God is that guideth it. *Non venit sine merito, quia Deus est justus: nec erit sine commodo, quia Deus est bonus.*—It comes not without our desert, for God is just: nor shall be without our profit, for God is merciful. God hath an herb which he often puts into his children's salad, that is rue: and man's herb, wherewith he eats it, must be *lapathum*, patience.

This rue is affliction, which hath a profitable effect in those that quietly digest it. Of all the herbs in the garden, only rue is the herb of grace. How much virtue is wrought in the soul by this bitter plant! It is held by some a sickness: it is rather physic, a sharp and short medicine, that bringeth with it much and long health. This, if they will needs have it a sickness, may be compared to the ague. The ague shakes a man worse than another disease that is mortal. At last it gives him a kind farewell, and says, 'I have purged thy cholera, and made thee healthful, by consuming and spending out that humour which would have endangered thy life.' Affliction in the taste is often more bitter than a judgment that kills outright; but at last it tells the soul, 'I have purged away thy foulness, wrought out thy lusts, and left thee a sound man.' So the good physician procureth to his patient a gentle ague, that he may cure him of a more dangerous disease: *Ut curet spasmodum, procurat febrim.* Christ, our best Physician, deals a little roughly with us, that he may set us straight. And howsoever the fever of affliction disquiet us a while, we shall sing in the conclusion with the Psalmist, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes,' Ps. cxix. 71.

Sape facit Deus opus quod non est suum; ut faciat opus quod est suum.—God by a work, that is none of his, effecteth a work in us that is his. He molests us with vexations, as he did Job,—which is Satan's work immediately, not his,—that thereby he might bring us to patience and obedience, which is his work immediately and wholly, not Satan's. 'So we are chas-

tened of the Lord, that we might not be condemned with the world,' 1 Cor. xi. 32.

Bees are drowned in honey, but live in vinegar; and good men grow the better affected the more they are afflicted. The poor man for his ague goes to his garden, and plucks up thyme. The remedy for this spiritual fever is true, but sensible patience. Men should feel God's strokes, and so bear them. It is dispraisable either to be senseless or fenceless; not to know we are stricken, or not to take the blows on the target of patience.

Many can lament the effects, but not the cause, and sorrow that God grieves them, not that they grieve God. They are angry with heaven for being angry with them. They with heaven for justice, that is angry with them for injustice. But *mereamus, quod mereamur poenam*,—let not the punishment, but the cause of it, make thy soul sorrowful. Know thou art whipped for thy faults, and apply to the prints the herb patience.

Heart's-ease, and Spiritual Joy.—Doth sorrow and anguish cast down a man's heart, and may he complain that his 'soul is disquieted within him?' Ps. xlii. Let him fetch an herb out of this garden, called heart's-ease; an inward joy which the Holy Ghost worketh in him. Though all 'the days of the afflicted be evil, yet a merry heart is a continual feast,' Prov. xv. 5. This is heaven upon earth: 'Peace of conscience, and joy of the Holy Ghost,' Rom. xiv. 17. His conscience is assured of peace with God, of reconciliation in the blood of Jesus, and that his soul is wrapped up in the bundle of life.

This may be well called heart's-ease: it is a holy, a happy herb to comfort the spirits. When worldly joys, either, like Rachel's children, are not, or, like Eli's, are rebellious, there is heart's-ease in this garden, that shall cheer him against all sorrows—certainty of God's favour. Let the world frown, and all things in it run cross to the grain of our minds; yet 'with thee, O Lord, is mercy, and plentiful redemption.' And, if nobody else, yet 'God will be still good to Israel, even to those that are of a pure heart,' Ps. lxxiii. 1. Those which we call penal evils, are either past, present, or to come; and they cause in the soul, sorrow, pain, fear. Evils past, sorrow; present, pain; future, fear. Here is heart's-ease for all these. Miseries past are solaced, because God hath turned them to our good, and we are made the better by once being worse. Miseries present find mitigation; and the infinite comfort that is with us, within us, sweetens the bitterness that is without us. Miseries future are to us contingent; they are uncertain, but our strength is certain: God. *Novi in quem credidi*,—'I know whom I have trusted.' Here is abundant ease to the heart.

Balsamum, or Faith.—Hath the heart got a green wound by committing some offence against God? for actual iniquity makes a gash in the soul. The good man runs for *balsamum*, and stancheth the blood: faith in the promises of Jesus Christ. He knows there is 'balm at Gilead, and there are physicians there; and therefore the health of his soul may easily be recovered,' Jer. viii. 22. He is sure that if the blood of Christ be applied, it will soon stanch the blood of his conscience, and keep him from bleeding to death; and that the wounds of his Saviour will cure the wounds of his soul. And though this virtual healing herb be in God's own garden, yet he hath a key to open it—prayer; and a hand to take it out, and to lay it on his sores—faith. This is a sovereign herb; and indeed so sovereign that there is no herb good to us without it. It may be called *panaces*; which physicians say is an herb for all manner of diseases, and is indeed the principal herb of grace; for it adorns the soul with all the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

St John's-wort, or Charity.—Doth the world, through sweetness of gain, that comes a little too fast upon a man, begin to carry away his heart to covetousness? Let him look in this garden for the herb called *St John's-wort*, charity and brotherly love. It is called *St John's herb* not improperly; for he spent a whole epistle in commending to us this grace, and often inculcated, 'Little children, love one another.' And he further teacheth that this love must be actual: 'For he that hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' 1 John iii. 17. He hath no such herb as *St John's-wort* in his garden. The good Christian considers that he hath the goods of this world to do good in this world; and that his riches are called *bona*, goods, *non quod faciant bonum, sed unde faciat bonum*,*—not that they make him a good man, but give him means to do good to others.

He learns a maxim of Christ from the world, which the world teacheth, but followeth not; that is, to make sure as much wealth as he can: as it were madness to leave those goods behind him, which he may carry with him. This policy we all confess good; but fail in the consecution. The world thinks that this assurance is got by purchasing great revenues, or by locking up gold in coffers. The Christian likes well to save what he can; but he thinks this not the way to do it. He considers that the richest hoarder leaves all behind him, and carries nothing but a winding-sheet to his grave. But he finds out this policy in the Scriptures, as David was resolved of his doubt in the sanctuary, Ps. lxxiii.: that what he charitably gives alive, he shall carry with him dead; and so resolves to give much, that he may keep much. Therefore what he must lose by keeping, he will keep by losing; and so proves richer under ground than ere he was above it. The poor man's hand he sees to be Christ's treasury; there he hoards up, knowing it shall be surely kept, and safely returned him. His garden shall stand full with *St John's-wort*; and charity is his herb to cure all the sores of covetousness.

Penny-royal, and Content.—Doth poverty fasten her sharp teeth in a man's sides, and cannot all his good industry keep want from his family? Let him come to this garden for a little *penny-royal*, content. This will teach him to think that God who feeds the ravens, and clothes the lilies, will not suffer him to lack food and raiment. The birds of the air neither plough nor sow, yet he never sees them lie dead in his way for want of provision. They sleep, and sing, and fly, and play, and lack not. He gathers hence infallibly, that God will bless his honest endeavours; and whiles he is sure of God's benediction, he thinks his *penny-royal*, his poor estate, rich. No man is so happy as to have all things; and none so miserable as not to have some. He knows he hath some, and that of the best riches; therefore resolveth to enjoy them, and want the rest with content. He that hath this herb in his garden, *penny-royal*, contentation of heart, be he never so poor, is very rich.

Agnus castus, and Continence.—Doth the rebellious flesh, upon a little indulgence, grow wanton; and would concupiscence enkindle the fire of lust? The good soul hath in this garden an herb called *agnus castus*, the chaste herb, and good store of lettuce, which physicians say cool this natural intemperate heat. His *agnus castus* and lettuce are prayer and fasting. He knows that if this kind of devil get possession of the heart, it 'goes not out but by prayer and fasting.' It is fasting spittle that must kill that serpent.

* Aug.

Mistress Venus dwells at the sign of the ivy-bush ; and where the belly is made a barrel, stuffed with delicious meats and heating drinks, the concupiscence will be luxurious of turpitudes. *Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus*.—Venery will freeze, if wine and junkets do not make her a fire. Lust will starve, if flesh pampering shall not get her a stomach. Where there is thin diet and clean teeth, there will follow chastity.

Barley-water, or Cool-anger.—Doth the heat of anger boil in a man's heart, and enrageth him to some violent and precipitate courses? Let him extract from this garden the juice of many cooling herbs ; and among the rest a drink of barley-water : a tyسان of meekness to cool this fire. He that hath proceeded to anger is a man ; he that hath not proceeded to sinful, harmful anger is a Christian. *Irasci hominis, injuriam non facere Christiani*.* The most loving man will chide his friend sweetly ; and he that doth not, 'hates him in his heart.' *Sic vigilet tolerantia, ut non dormiat disciplina*.† But he will not be transported with anger, to the loss of his friends, of himself. He considers that God is 'provoked every day, yet is long-suffering, and of great goodness.' He hears that others speak ill of him ; he judgeth not without certain knowledge. Knowing, he suffers not himself to be abused. It were silliness to believe all ; sullenness to believe none. The wrong done to God and a good conscience must move him.

'Non patitur ludum fama, fides, oculus,'—

A man's name, his faith, and his eye, must not be jested withal. Yet when he is most angry he recollects himself, and claps upon his head a tyسان of meekness.

Parsley, or Frugality.—Declines a man's estate in this world, as if his hand had scattered too lavishly, there is an herb in this garden ; let him for a while feed on it—parsley, parsimony. Hereon he will abridge himself of some superfluities ; and remember that moderate fare is better than a whole college of physicians. He will wear good clothes, and never better, knowing there is no degree beyond decency. It was for Pompey to wear as rich a scarf about his leg as other princes wore on their heads. But the frugal man can clothe himself all over decently with half the cost that one of our gallant Pompeys caseth his leg. He that would not want long, let him practise to want somewhat before he extremely needs. I have read of an English martyr, that being put into a prison at Canterbury, tried (when she had liberty of better fare) to live on a spare diet, as preparing and preparing herself with ability to brook it when necessity should put her to it.‡ Frugality puts but three fingers into the purse at once : prodigality scatters it by heaps and handfuls. It is reported that Cæsar's host lived a long time at Dyrhachium with coleworts, whereof arose the proverb, *Lapsana vivere*, to live sparingly. That stock lasts that is neither hoarded miserably nor dealt out indiscreetly. We sow the furrow, not by the sack, but by the handful. The wise man knows it is better looking through a poor lattice-window than through an iron gate ; and though he will lend what he may, he will not borrow till he must needs.

Liver-wort, or Peaceable Love.—Is a man sick in his liver by accession of some distemperature? Doth his charity and love to some neighbours, for their malignancy against him, fail and faint in his heart? For they say, *Cogit amare jecur*. I stand not here on the distinction betwixt *amare* and *diligere*. Then let him step to this garden for some *jecuraria* ; we call it liver-wort. He asks of his heart for his old love, his wonted amity. If his

* Jerom.

† Aug.

‡ Martyrol.

reason answer that the persecutions of such and such calumnies have fled her into another country, he is not at quiet till affection fetch it home again. He thinks that night he sleeps without charity in his bosom, his pillow is harder than Jacob's was at Bethel, Gen. xxviii. If carnal respects can draw him to love his friend for his profit, or his kinsman for blood, he will much more love a Christian for his Father's sake, for his own sake.

There is a story (nothing worth but for the moral) of a great king, that married his daughter to a poor gentleman that loved her. But his grant had a condition annexed to it, that whensoever the gentleman's left side looked black, or he lost his wedding-ring, he should not only lose his wife, but his life. One day, pursuing his sports, he fell into a quarrel, where at once he received a bruise on his left breast, and lost his ring in the scuffling. The tumult over, he perceived the danger whereinto his own heedlessness had brought him, and in bitterness of soul shed many tears. In his sorrow he spied a book, which opening, he found therein his ring again, and the first words he read were a medicine for a bruised side. It directed him three herbs, whereof a plaster applied should not fail to heal him. He did so : was cured, was secured.

The application is this : The great King of heaven marries to man, poor man, his own daughter, mercy and everlasting kindness ; but threatens him that his side must not look black, his heart must not be polluted with spiritual adulteries, nor must he lose his wedding-ring, love to God and his saints, lest he forfeit both God's mercy and his own salvation. Man, in the pursuit of worldly affairs, quarrels with his neighbours, and scuffles with contention. So his heart takes a bruise, and looks black with hatred ; and charity, his wedding-ring, is lost in these wilful turbulencies and vexations. What should he do but mourn ? Lo, God in his goodness directs him to a book, the holy Gospel. There the Spirit helps him to his ring again, his former love ; and to heal his bruise, prescribes him three herbs :

First, rue, or herb of grace, which is repentance : this teacheth him to sorrow for his strife and emulation, and purgeth away the bruised blood.

The second is the flower *de luce*, thankfulness : he considers how infinitely God hath loved him ; therefore he must needs love God, and in him his. *Beatus qui amat te, et amicum in te, et inimicum propter te.* He knows it impossible to love him he hath not seen, and to hate his image which he hath seen.

The third, camomile, which will grow the faster for injuries. Many wrongs hereafter shall not put him out of charity. A good plaster of these herbs will draw his bosom white again ; and when it is so, let him use *jecuraria*, liver-wort, a continual application of love to his heart : that he, keeping his ring of faith sure from losing, and his breast from the self-procured blows of contention, he may hold also his wife for ever, that beautiful daughter of the King, God's eternal mercy.

Lily, or Purenness of Heart.—Doth a man perceive his heart a little begilded with ostentation, and desires he to seem better than he is ? And how easily is man won to answer his commanders' speculation ? Let him fetch the lily, pureness of heart, which is an herb of grace, growing in the humble valley of a meek spirit, yet is white and lovely. He knows God can unmask the vizarded face, and turn the inside outward. If a man be a Herod within and a John without, a wicked politician in a ruff of precisian set, God can distinguish him. There are too many of these, that stand up in the fabric like pyramids : it were better for us, for themselves, if they were but good honest pillars. Plain-dealing is a good plain-song, and makes

better music than a forced squeaking treble, that troubles us all with novel-ties. Shallow honesty is more commendable than the profound quicksands of subtlety; and one leaf of the plane-tree is better than many handfuls of the pricking holly. 'They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep,' Ps. lxiv. 6. But when God shall wound them with his arrow, 'they shall make their tongue fall upon themselves.' Such a man's own wit shall snare him, and he shall sing, or rather sigh, *Ingenio perii*. They are glad of Christ's cross; not to suffer for it, but to enjoy plenitude of riches by it; and so, like many in great funerals, rejoice to be mourners, that they may get some of the blacks. Put them to no charges, and they will make you believe they are strongly, strangely religious. But 'shall we offer burnt-sacrifices to the Lord our God of that which cost us nothing?' 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. Christ compares this man to 'a painted sepulchre.' *Sepulchrum quasi semi-pulchrum*, saith one. *Extra nitidum, intus fetidum*. But let them be the men they seem, and not nettles in the midst of a rose-cake. The good great man, though he be able securely to do much mischief, regards more the sin's indignity than his own indemnity.

Enula campana, or Obedience.—Perhaps evil example hath suddenly, and without provided consideration, led a man into evil. Let him run to this garden for *enula campana*. This herb is that Christ enjoined us: 'Search the Scriptures,' add hereto the word of the Lord. This shall give decision of all doubts, and teach thee what path to fly, what way to take. It is written of this herb, *Enula campana reddit precordia sana*. It is true of our constant cleaving to the word, that it shall purge the heart of what corruption soever bad precedents have put into it. Of all the herbs in thy garden lose not this. Forego not the 'sword of the Spirit:' it is thy best weapon.

Heart-wort, or Affiance in God's Promises.—It may be sorrow of heart for sin hath cast a man down, and he is swallowed up of too much heaviness. There is an herb to comfort him called heart-wort, affiance in the merciful promises of God, passed to him by word, oath, seal, scriptures, sacraments; and therefore infallible. 'At what time soever, what sinner soever repents of what sin soever, God will put all his wickedness out of his remembrance.' He will not let that promise fall to the ground, but accomplisheth it with peace and joy: 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,' Matt. v. 4. He believes that his wet seed-time shall have a glad harvest: 'for they that sow in tears shall reap in joy,' Ps. cxxvi. 5. He persuades himself that the days of mourning will pass away, as the wind blows over the rain; and then 'God will wipe away all tears from his eyes,' Rev. vii. 17, with the hand of mercy. This confidence in the midst of all sorrows is his heart-wort.

Hyacinth, or following Christ.—Say that the Christian hath met with some gilded pill of corruption, some poisonous doctrine, yet plausible to flesh and blood. Let him search his garden for hyacinth, or *solsequium*, turnsol; an herb that duly and obediently follows the sun. Do thou follow the Sun of righteousness, Mal. iv. 2, and let his bright beams guide thy course, who hath promised to teach all those that with a humble heart and earnest prayer seek it at his hands. Follow the Sun, and he will bring thee where he is, to heaven, at the right hand of his Father. Let no wandering planet err thee, but adhere to the Sun with a faithful imitation.

Care-away.—If worldly troubles come too fast upon a man, he hath an herb called care-away. Not that he bequeathes himself to a supine negli-

gence, as if God would fill his house with provision, while he sits and sings care away; but as he is free from idleness, so also from distrust. He considers the ravens and lilies, and knows that the Lord is the 'preserver of men,' as well as of fowls; that he respects man above those, and his own above other men. Therefore he throws all his cares upon God, as if they were too heavy a load for himself. Solicitous thoughtfulness can give him no hurt, but this herb care-away shall easily cure it.

Holy Thistle, or Good Resolution.—Yield that he is pressed with injuries; as 'who will live godly in Christ, and shall not suffer persecution?' He is oppressed by force or fraud, might or subtlety, and cannot help himself. He hath a good herb in this garden, called *carduus benedictus*, holy thistle, a godly resolution, that through many miseries he must enter heaven. He rests himself on God, and rather wisheth his harmlessness should suffer than himself not to give passive and patient obedience to lawful authority. 'Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known to thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image,' Dan. iii. 17.

There are many other herbs in this garden: as if he be to deal with crafty adversaries, let him fetch some *sage*, honest policy, and such as may stand with an untrenched conscience. For Christ gave us this allowance, to be 'wise as serpents,' though withal a cohibition, that we be 'harmless as doves,' Matt. x. 16. If he be tempted to ebriety, he hath in this garden *coleworts*, moderate abstinence. Matthiolus, on the preface of Dioscorides, notes such a natural enmity betwixt this herb and drunkenness, that if you plant colewort near to the roots of the vine, of itself it fieth from them. But I excuse myself.

'Non ego cuncta meis amplecti versibus opto.'

I would not leave nothing unsaid. Thus I have walked you through a sacred garden of many gracious herbs. I will stay you no longer than to hear your blessing.

IV. 'It receiveth blessing from God.' The reward gives a happy conclusion to this good ground. So it pleaseth the Lord to accept our labours, that he will reward them; not after our own merit, for that is not an atom, but after his own mercy, which exceeds heaven and earth. Receive this blessing with a thankful heart; thou hast not earned it. It is objected that here it is said, their 'works are meet for God,' therefore deserve this blessing. And, Wisd. iii. 5, 'God proved them, and found them meet for himself,' as if they could stand God's trial. And Paul exhorts us to 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called,' Eph. iv. 1. I answer, *Deus coronat dona sua, non merita nostra*,*—God rewards his own works, not our worth. It is given, *non meritis operantis, sed miseratione donantis*,—not for the deserts of the doer, but for the mercy of the giver. *Datur operatoribus, non pro operibus*. Luke xii. 32, 'It is my Father's will to give you a kingdom.'

Do we good? From whom is it? Doth not God work in us to will and to do? Thou hast done well; be comforted, be not proud. It was God's work, not thine. *Omnia merita Dei dona sunt; et ita homo propter ipsa magis Deo debitor est, quam Deus homini*,†—All our good works are God's gifts: and therefore man is more beholden to God for them, than God to man. If in this garden any good herb spring over the wall, and saucily challenge to itself a prerogative of merit, deal with it as the gardener with

* Aug.

† Bern.

superfluous branches—prune it off. Or as Torquatus with his over-venturous son; cut it short with the sword of the Spirit for daring beyond its commission. Our adversaries oppose this truth very violently, both in the schools and in the pulpits; but come they to their deathbeds, to argue it between God and their own souls, then grace and grace alone, mercy and only mercy, Jesus and none but Jesus.

And this even their great Bell-wether* is forced to acknowledge. *Propter incertitudinem propriae justitiae, et periculum inanis gloriae, tutissimum est fiduciam totam in sola Dei misericordia et benignitate reponere.* I will translate his words truly: 'By reason of the uncertainty of our own righteousness, and the danger of vainglory, the safest course is to put our whole trust and confidence in the only favour and mercy of God.' But perhaps Bellarmine spoke this as a mere Jesuit; and now made palpable, he may be willing to recant and unsay it.

This blessing then comes not for the ground's merit, but for the dresser's mercy. It is said, Gen. vi., that God would destroy the world with a flood, 'because the imaginations of man's heart were only evil continually.' And, Gen. viii., it is said that God will no more curse and destroy the ground for man's sake, 'because the imaginations of his heart are only evil from his youth.' The same reason that is alleged why God will not spare the world is also alleged why God will spare the world.

It serves plentifully to demonstrate that not for man's merit, but for God's mercy, confusion is withheld. 'I am the Lord, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.'

'It receiveth.' Such is the immense goodness of God that he will add grace to grace, and when he hath shewn mercy he will shew more mercy. As if he expected no other argument of future bounty but his former bounty. 'Whom he did predestinate, them also he called; and whom he called, them also he justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified,' Rom. viii. 30. Man is to be considered in a fourfold estate—*confectionis, infectionis, refectionis, perfectionis*. First, God made him happy; without misery, without iniquity: 'God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions,' Eccles. vii. 29. If a glorious heaven above him, a fruitful earth under him, serviceable creatures about him, could give him solace and felicity, he was not scanted. Here is man's first draught of God's bounty—his original state. Then man fell from holiness, and so from happiness, and lost the favour of the Creator with the good of the creature, that a general curse fell on the earth for his sake. Lo, now he lies weltering in his gore, who shall heal him, who shall revive him? God promised him a Saviour, and kept his word. Look on his own only Son, hanging, bleeding, dying on an accursed cross. A Redeemer is come; what is man the better for it that hath no power to believe on him? Faith he hath none, but what God must put into him. Again, Lord, help; let us receive yet a third mercy: make us believers, or we are never the better. We had as good have no Saviour as not to have him our Saviour; and ours he cannot be unless the Lord make us his. Lastly, the Lord gives us faith: and so we shall receive a happiness by this believed Saviour, better than ever our first creation gave us—a kingdom, a kingdom of life, an eternal kingdom of life, that can never be taken from us. Thus we are still receivers, and God is the giver. 'We receive blessing from God.'

'Blessing.' This word is of a great latitude. What good is there which will not be brought within this compass? This blessing hath a double

* Bellar. de Justif., lib. v., cap. 7.

extent. There is *beatitudo viæ*, and *beatitudo patriæ*: 1. A blessing of the way; and, 2. A blessing of the country; one of grace, the other of glory.

1. The former is either outward or inward.

(1.) Outward. 'I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread,' Ps. cxxxii. 15: 'Blessed in the field, blessed in the city; the fruits of thy body, of thy ground, of thy cattle, shall be blessed; thy basket, thy store, thy going out and coming in, shall be blessed,' Deut. xxviii. 4. Which things do often come to the godly even on earth, and that in abundance. For as all have not riches that exceedingly love them, so many have them that do not much care for them. Wealth is like a woman—the more courted, the further off.

(2.) Inward. The godly on earth is, as it were, in the suburbs of heaven, whose 'kingdom consists, not in meat and drink, but righteousness, peace of conscience, and joy of the Holy Ghost,' Rom. xiv. 17. Could his life be as full of sorrows as ever Lazarus was full of sores, yet he is blessed. The sunshine of mercy is still upon him, and the blessing of God makes him rich. Let the air thunder, and the earth quake, and hell roar, yet 'he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely,' Prov. x. 9. *Qui vadit plane, vadit sane.* I have read it storied of a young virgin, that at a great prince's hands had the choice of three vessels; one whereof should be freely given her, even that she should choose. The first was a vessel of gold, richly wrought, and set with precious stones, and on it written, 'Who chooseth me shall have what he deserveth.' The second was of silver, superscribed thus, 'Who chooseth me shall have what nature desireth.' The third was of lead, whose motto was this, 'Who chooseth me shall have what God hath disposed.' The former pleased her eye well, but not her understanding: it offered what she deserved. She knew that was just nothing; therefore refused it. The second considered, offered what nature desires. She thought that could be no solid good, for nature desires such things as please the carnal lust. This she also refused. The third had a coarse outside, but the sentence pleased her well—offering what God had disposed. So she faithfully put herself upon God's ordinance, and chose that. This virgin is man's soul. The golden vessel is the world's riches; contentful to an avarous eye. Too many choose this; but, being opened, it was full of dead men's bones and a fool's bauble: to testify them fools which cleave to the world, and at last all their hopes shall be rewarded with a bauble. Neither is this all: though 'their inward thought be, that their houses shall continue for ever; yet they shall be laid in the grave like sheep, and death shall feed on them,' Ps. xlix. 11, 14. The silver vessel is the lusts of the flesh, those fond and vain delights which concupiscence seeks. So saith the motto, 'It gives what nature desireth;' but corrupt nature affects nothing but what gives complacency to the flesh. This vessel, opened, was full of wild-fire and an iron whip. God shall scourge the lustful here with the whip of judgments—diseases of body, infamy of name, overthrow of estate, vexation of conscience. And Satan shall hereafter burn them in wild-fire, such flames as can never be quenched. The leaden vessel is, as the sense and sentence declare it, the blessing of God. The chooser of it shall have what God hath disposed for him. Blessed soul that makes this election! for, opened, it was found full of gold and most precious jewels, every one more worth than a world—the immortal graces of God's Spirit.

The virgin chose this, and she was married to the king's son. Choose this vessel, O my soul, and Jesus Christ, the King of heaven, shall marry thee. No matter though it seems lead without, and glister not with earthly

vanities, it is rich within; the wealth thereof cannot be valued, though all the arithmeticians of the world go about to sum it. 'There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us,' Ps. iv. 6.

2. This blessing hath yet a further extent, to the blessedness of our country: when we shall hear, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,' Matt. xxv. 34. For, *Si sic bonus es sequentibus te, qualis futurus es consequentibus*,*—If thou, Lord, be so good to those that follow thee, what wilt thou be to those that find thee! If there be such blessing in this world, what shall that be in the life to come! If the first-fruits of our inheritance and the earnest of the Spirit be so graciously sweet here, surely when that infinite mass of glory shall be broken up and communicated to us, we shall be wonderfully ravished. 'When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away,' 1 Cor. xiii. 10. This is *beata vita in fonte*, saith Augustine,—a blessed life indeed. *Eterna sine successione, distributa sine diminutione, communis sine invidia, sufficiens sine indigentia, jucunda sine tristitia, beata sine omni miseria*. 'Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is the fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore,' Ps. xvi. 11.

No tongue can declare this blessing: happy heart that shall feel it! whose glorified eye shall one day behold all, and ten thousand times more than we have spoken; who shall say, as it is in the psalm, *Sicut audivimus, ita et vidimus*,—'As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of our God.' As we have heard it preached on earth, we now find it true in heaven; though the city we enjoy doth far excel the map we saw.

Well, this is God's blessing, and he will give it to the good ground. Labour we then to be fruitful gardens, and to abound with gracious herbs, that God may in this world shower upon us the dews of his mercy, and after this life transplant us to his heavenly paradise. Let not the pleasures of sin, the lusts of the wanton flesh, the riches, snares, cares of the world; nor all those transient delights whose taste is only in the sense, the operation in the conscience, that tickle men for an hour, and wound them for ever; nor all those vain desires of carnal complacency which shall one day be laid upon God's cold earth, intercept us to the privation of this blessing.

Let us not be hunting after sports, as Esau for venison, and lose our blessing, lest we cry, howl, roar, when it is too late to recover it. Think, oh, think, there is a heaven, a God, a Jesus, a kingdom of glory, society of angels, communion of saints, joy, peace, happiness, and eternity of all these, which it will be a fearful thing to lose for the base pleasures and short delights of this world.

O great God of all, and sweet Father of thy chosen, pour upon us thy holy dews of grace; make our souls to stand thick with sanctified herbs, that we may receive thy blessing; that, honouring thee in the day of grace, we may be honoured by thee in the day of glory! Grant this for thy loved Son, and our loving Saviour, even Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

* Bern. Serm. 47 in Cant.