

17. But yet when all other means do fail, marriage is God's appointed means, to quench those flames from which men's vows cannot, in cases of true necessity, disoblige them.

CHAPTER II.

Directions for the right Choice of Servants and Masters.

PART I.

Directions for the right Choice of Servants.

SERVANTS being integral parts of the family, who contribute much to the holiness or unholiness of it, and to the happiness or misery of it, it much concerneth masters to be careful in their choice. And the harder it is to find such as are indeed desirable, the more careful and diligent in it should you be.

Direct. 1. 'To bid you choose such as are fittest for your service, is a direction which nature and interest will give you, without any persuasions of mine.' And indeed it is not mere honesty or piety that will make a good servant, nor do your work. Three things are necessary to make a servant fit for you: 1. Strength. 2. Skill. 3. Willingness. And no two of these will serve without the third. Strength and skill without willingness, will do nothing: skill and willingness without strength, can do nothing: strength and willingness without skill, will do as bad, or worse than nothing. No less than all will make you a good servant. Therefore choose one, 1. That is healthful. 2. That hath been used to such work as you must employ him in: and, 3. One that is not of a fleshpleasing, or lazy, sluggish disposition. For to exact labour from one that is sickly will seem cruelty: and to expect labour from one that is unskilful and unexercised will seem folly: and heavy, fleshly, slothful persons, will do all with so much unwillingness, and pain, and weariness, that they will think all too much, and their service will be a continual toil and displeasure to them, and they will think you wrong them, or deal hardly with them, if you will not allow them in their flesh-

liness and idleness. Yea, though they should have grace, a phlegmatic, sluggish, heavy body, will never be fit for diligent service ; any more than a tired horse for travel.

Direct. 11. ‘ If it be possible, choose such as have the fear of God, or at least such as are tractable and willing to be taught, and not such as are ungodly, sensual, and profane.’ For, 1. “ God hateth all the workers of iniquity*.” And it tendeth not to the blessing or safety of your family, to have in it such as are enemies to God, and hated by him. You cannot expect an equal blessing on their labours, as you may on the service of those that fear him. The wicked may bring a curse on the families where they are (if you wilfully entertain them): when a Joseph may be a blessing even to the house of an unbeliever. A wicked man will be renewing those crimes, which will be the shame of your family, and a grief to your hearts, if you have any love to God yourselves: when a godly servant will pray for a blessing from God upon his labours, and is himself under a promise, that “ whatever he doth shall prosper.” 2. Ungodly servants for the most part will be mere eye-servants: they will do little more than they find necessary to escape reproof and blame: some few of them indeed out of love to their masters, or out of a desire of praise, or to make their places the better to themselves, will be diligent and trusty: but ordinarily they are deceitful, and study more to seem good servants, than to be such, and to hide their faults, than to avoid them: for they make no great matter of conscience of it, nor do they regard the eye of God: whereas a truly godly servant will do all your service in obedience to God, as if God himself had bid him do it, and as one that is always in the presence of that master, whose favour he preferreth before all the world: he is more careful to please God, who commandeth him to be faithful, than to please you by seeming better than he is: he is moved more to his duty by the reward which God hath promised him, than by the wages which he expecteth from you: he hath a tender, purified conscience, which will hold him to his duty, as well when you know it not, as when you stand by. 3. Ordinarily, ungodly servants will be false, if they have but opportunity to enrich themselves by deceiving you: especially those that

* Psal. v. 5.

are intrusted in laying out money, in buying and selling. As long as I name no particular persons, I think it no untrustiness, but my duty, to warn masters whom they trust, by my experience from the confessions of those that have been guilty. Many servants whom God hath converted to his love and fear, have told me how constantly they deceived their masters in buying and selling before their conversion; even of so great sums of money, that some of them were not able to restore it (when I made them know it was their duty so far as they were able): and some of them had so much unquietness of conscience till it was restored, that I have been fain to give them money to restore, when I have convinced them of it: so that I know by such confessions, that such deceit and robbing of their masters is a very ordinary thing among ungodly servants that have opportunity, that yet pass for very trusty servants, and are never discovered. 4. Also an ungodly servant will be a tempter to the rest, and will be drawing them to sin: especially to secret wantonness, and uncivil carriage, if not to actual fornication; and to revellings, and merriments, and fleshly courses: by swearing, and taking God's name in vain, and cursing, and lying they will teach your children and other servants to do the like; and so to be an infectious pestilence in your families. 5. And they will hinder any good which you would do on others. If there be any in your family under convictions, and in a hopeful way to a better condition, they will quench all, and discourage them and hinder their conversion; partly by their contradicting cavils, and partly by their scorns, and partly by their diverting, idle talk, and partly by their ill examples, and alluring them to accompany them in their sin. Whereas on the contrary a godly servant will be drawing the rest of your family to godliness, and hindering them from sin, and persuading them to be faithful in their duty both to God and you.

Direct. 111. 'Yet measure not the godliness of a servant by his bare knowledge or words, but by his Love and Conscience.' A great deal of self-conceited talkativeness about religion may stand with an unsanctified heart and life: and much weakness in knowledge and utterance, may stand with sincerity. But you may safely judge those to be truly godly, 1. Who love godliness, and love the Word and ser-

vants of God, and hate all wickedness. 2. And those that make conscience to do their duty, and to avoid known sin both openly and in secret.

Direct. iv. ' If necessity constrain you to take those that are unfit and bad, remember that there is the greater duty incumbent on you, to carry yourself towards them in a vigilant, convincing manner, so as tendeth most to make them better.' Take them not as you buy a horse or an ox, with a purpose only to use them for your work : but remember they have immortal souls which you take charge of.

PART II.

Directions for the right Choice of Masters.

SEEING the happiness of a servant, the safety of his soul, and the comfort of his life, depend very much upon the family and place which he liveth in, it much concerneth every prudent servant to be very careful in what place or family he take up his abode, and to make the wisest choice he can.

Direct. i. ' Above all be sure that you choose not for mere fleshly ease and sensuality, and take not that for the best place for you, where you may have most of your own carnal will and pleasure.' I know that fleshly, graceless servants, will hear this Direction with as ill a will, as a dog when he is forbidden his meat or carrion. I know I speak against their very nature, and therefore against their very hearts, and therefore they will think I speak against their interest and good : and therefore I may persuade them to this course a hundred times, before they will believe me, or obey my counsel. All ungodly, fleshly servants, do make these the only signs of a good place, or desirable service for them : 1. If they may do what work they will, and avoid that which they dislike : if they may do that which is easy, and not that which is hard : and that which is an honour to them, and not that which seemeth inferior and base. 2. If they may work when they will, and give over when they will. 3. If they may rise when they will, and go to bed when they will. 4. If they may eat and drink what they will, and fare well to the pleasing of their appetites. 5. If they may speak when they will, and what they have a mind

to speak. 6. If they may have leave when they will to sport, and play, and be wanton and vain, and waste their time, which they call being merry. 7. If they may wear the best apparel and go fine. 8. If their masters will be liberal to them, to maintain all this, and will give them what they would have. 9. If their masters and fellow servants carry it respectfully to them, and praise them, and make somebody of them, and do not dishonour them, nor give them any displeasing words. 10. And if they are not troubled with the precepts of godliness, nor set to learn the Scripture, or catechized, nor called to account about the state of their souls, or the ground of their hope for the life to come, nor troubled with much praying, or repeating sermons, or religious exercise or discourse, or any thing that tendeth to their salvation: nor be restrained from any sin, which they have a mind to; nor reprov'd for it when they have done it. These are an ungodly, carnal person's conditions, or signs of a good service. Which is, in a word, to have their own wills and fleshly desires, and not to be crossed by their masters' wills, or the will of God: which in effect is, to have the greatest helps to do the devil's will, and to be damned.

Direct. 11. 'See that it be your first and principal care, to live in such a place where you have the greatest helps and smallest hindrances to the pleasing of God, and the saving of your souls: and in such a place where you shall have no liberty to sin, nor have your fleshly will fulfilled, but shall be best instructed to know and do the will of God, and under him the will of your superiors.' It is the mark of those whom God forsaketh, to be given up to their own wills, or "to their own hearts' lusts, to walk in their own counsels^b." "To live after the flesh," is the certain way to endless misery^c. To be most subject to the will of God, with the greatest mortification and denial of our own wills, is the mark of the most obedient, holy soul. Seeing then that holiness and self-denial, the loving of God, and the mortifying of the flesh, are the life of grace, and the health and rectitude of the soul, and the only way (under Christ) to our salvation; you have great reason to think that place the best for you, in which you have most helps

^b Psal. lxxxi. 12.

^c Rom. viii. 8. 13.

for holiness and self-denial: and not only to bear patiently the strictness of your superiors, and the labour which they put you upon for your souls, but also to desire and seek after such helps, as the greatest mercies upon earth. "First seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness: labour not (first) for the food that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life^d." Take care first that your souls be provided for, and take that for the best service which helpeth you most in the service of God, to your salvation.

Direct. 111. 'If it be possible, live where there is a faithful, powerful, convincing minister, whose public teaching, and private counsel you may make use of for your souls.' Live not, if you can avoid it, under an ignorant, dead, unprofitable teacher, that will never afford you any considerable help to lift up your hearts to a heavenly conversation. But seeing you must spend the six days in your labour, live where you have the best helps, to spend the Lord's day, for the quickening and comforts of your souls; that in the strength of that holy food, you may cheerfully perform your sanctified labours, on the week days following. Be not like those brutish persons, that live as if there were no life but this; and therefore take care to get a place, where their bodies may be well fed and clothed, and may have ease, and pleasure, and preferment for the world; but care not much what teacher there is, to be their guide to heaven; nor whether ever they be seriously foretold of the world to come, or not.

Direct. iv. 'Live, if you can obtain so great a mercy, with superiors that fear God, and will have a care of your souls, as well as of your bodies, and will require you to do God's service as well as their own: and not with worldly, ungodly masters, that will use you as they do their beasts, to do their work, and never take care to further your salvation.' For, 1. The curse of God is in the families of the ungodly, and who would willingly live in a house that God hath cursed, any more than in a house that is haunted with evil spirits! But God himself doth dwell with the godly, and by many promises hath assured them of his love and blessing. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the

^d John vi. 27.

wicked; but he bleaseth the habitation of the just^e." "The wicked are overthrown, and are not; but the house of the righteous shall stand^f." "The house of the wicked shall be overthrown; but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish^g." "The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness^h." Go not into a falling house. 2. A master that feareth God, will help to save you from sin and hell, and help your souls to life eternal: he may do more for you, than if he make you kings and rulers of the earth. He will hinder you from sin: he will teach you to know God, and to prepare for your salvation. Whereas ungodly masters will rather discourage you, and by mocks or threatenings, seek to drive you from a holy life, and use their wit, and work, and authority, to hinder your salvation: or at best will take little care of your souls but think if they provide you food and wages, they have done their parts. 3. A master that feareth God will do you no wrong, but will love you as a Christian, and his fellow-servant of Christ, while he commandeth and employeth you as his own servant, which cannot be expected from ignorant, ungodly, worldly men.

Direct. v. 'Yet choose such a service as you are fit to undergo, with the least hindrance of the service of God, and of your souls.' Neither a life of idleness, nor of excess of business should be chosen, if you have your choice. For when the mind is overwhelmed with the cares of your service, and your bodies tired with excessive labour, you will have little time, or heart, or power, to mind the matters of your souls with any seriousness. Yea, the Lord's day will be spent with little comfort, when the toil of the week days hath left the body fit for nothing but to sleep. A service which alloweth you no time at all to pray, or read the Scripture, or mind your everlasting state, is a life more fit for beasts than men.

Direct. vi. 'If you can attain it, live where your fellow-servants fear God, as well as the master of the family.' For fellow-servants usually converse with one another more frequently and familiarly than their masters do with any of them. And therefore if a master give you the most

^e Prov. iii. 33.

^f Prov. xiv. 11. So Prov. xv. 25.

^g Prov. xii. 7.

^h Prov. xxi. 12.

heavenly instructions, the idle, frothy talk of fellow-servants may blot out all from your memories and hearts. And their derision of a holy life, or their bad examples, may do more hurt, than the precepts of the governors can do good. Whereas when a master's counsels are seconded by the good discourse and practice of fellow-servants, it is a great encouragement to good, and keepeth the heart in a continual warmth and resolution.

Direct. VII. 'If you want any one of these accommodations, be the more diligent in such an improvement of the rest, as may make up your want.' If you have a good teacher and a bad master, improve the helps of your teacher the more diligently. If you have a bad master and good fellow-servants, or a good master and bad fellow-servants, thank God for that which you have, and make the best of it.

Direct. VIII. 'If you would be accommodated yourselves with the best master and usage, labour to be the best servants; and then it is two to one but you may have your choice.' Good servants are so scarce, and so much valued, that the best places would strive for you, if you will strive to be such. Excel others in labour and diligence, and trustiness, and obedience, and gentleness, and patience, and then you may have almost what places you desire. But if you will yourselves be idle, and slothful, and deceitful, and false, and disobedient, and unmannerly, and self-willed, and contentious, and impatient, and yet think that you must be respected, and used as good and faithful servants, it is but a foolish expectation. For what obligation is there upon others, in point of justice, to give you that which you deserve not? Indeed if any be bound to keep you in mere charity, then you may plead charity with them and not desert: but if they take you but as servants, they owe you nothing but what your work and virtues shall deserve.