

HUSBANDRY

SPIRITUALIZED:

OR,

THE HEAVENLY USE OF EARTHLY THINGS.

Consisting of many pleasant *observations*, pertinent *applications*, and serious *reflections*; and each chapter concluded with a *divine* and suitable *poem*. Directing *husbandmen* to the most excellent improvements of their common employments. Whereunto are added, by way of *Appendix*, several choice *occasional meditations*, upon *birds, beasts, trees, flowers, rivers*, and several other objects; fitted for the help of such as desire to walk with God in all their solitudes, and recesses from the world.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To the Worshipful ROBERT SAVERY, and WILLIAM SAVERY, of
Slade, Esquires.

Honoured Friends,

IT hath been long since observed, that the world below is a glass to discover the world above; *Seculum est speculum*: and although I am not of their opinion, that say, the Heathens may spell Christ out of the sun, moon, and stars; yet this I know, that the irrational and inanimate, as well as rational creatures, have a language; and though not by articulate speech, yet in a metaphorical sense, they preach unto man the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, Rom. i. 20. "There is (saith the Psalmist, Psalm xix. 3.) no speech, nor language, "where their voice is not heard." Or (as Junius renders it) there is no speech, nor words, yet without these, their voice is understood, and their line (i. e. saith Diodate) their writing in gross and plain draughts, is gone out through all the earth.

As man is compounded of a fleshly and spiritual substance, so God hath endowed the creatures with a spiritual, as well as fleshly usefulness, they have not only a natural use in alimental and physical respects, but also a spiritual use, as they bear the figures and similitudes of many sublime and heavenly mysteries. Believe me (saith contemplative Bernard) thou shalt find more in the woods, than in a corner; stones and trees will teach thee what thou shalt not hear from learned doctors. By a skilful and industrious improvement of the crea-

tures (saith Mr. Baxter excellently) we might have a fuller taste of Christ and heaven, in every bit of bread that we eat, and in every draught of beer that we drink, than most men have in the use of the sacrament.

And as the creatures teach divine and excellent things, so they teach them in a perspicuous and taking manner: *Duo illa nos maxime movent, similitudo et exemplum*, saith the orator*. These two things, similitude, and example, do especially move us. Notions are more easily conveyed to the understanding, by being first clothed in some apt similitude, and so represented to the sense. And therefore Jesus Christ the great Prophet, delighted much in teaching by parables: and the prophets were much in this way also, Hos. xii. 10. "I have used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets." Those that can retain little of a sermon, yet ordinarily retain an apt similitude.

I confess it is an humbling consideration, That man, who at first was led by the knowledge of God to the knowledge of the creature, must now by the creatures learn to know God. That the creatures, (as one saith) like Balaam's ass, should teach their master. But though this be the unhappiness of poor man in his collapsed state, yet it is now his wisdom to improve such helps: and whilst others, by the abuse of the creatures, are furthering their perdition, to be, by the spiritual improvement of them, promoting his own salvation.

It is an excellent art to discourse with birds, beasts, and fishes, about sublime and spiritual subjects, and make them answer to your questions; and this may be done, Job xii. 7, 8. "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee, and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee." That is (saith neat and accurate† Caryl) the creatures teach us when we think of them: 'They teach us, though not formally, yet virtually; they answer and resolve the question put to them, though not explicitly to the ear, yet convincingly to the conscience. So then, we ask the creatures, when we diligently consider them, when we search out the perfections and virtues that God hath put into, or stamp't upon them. To set our mind thus upon the creature, is to discourse with the creature; the questions which man asks of a beast, are only his own meditations. Again, the creatures teach us, when we in meditation make our collections and draw down a demonstration of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in making them, or the frailty of man in needing them: such conclusions and inferences are the teachings of the creatures.'

Common objects (saith‡ another) may be improved two ways; viz. In an argumentative, and in a representative way; by reasoning from them, and by viewing the resemblance that is betwixt them and spiritual matters.

* Cicero.

† Caryl. in loc.

‡ Dr. Manton.

First, In meditation argue thus, as in the present case and similitude of the apostle. If an husbandman upon the ordinary principles of reason can wait for the harvest, shall not I wait for the coming of the Lord, the day of refreshing? the corn is precious to him, and so is the coming of Christ to me. Shall he be so patient, and endure so much for a little corn? and shall not I for the kingdom of heaven! He is willing to stay till all causes have had their operations, till he hath received the former and the latter rain; and shall not I, till the Divine decrees be accomplished.

Secondly, In meditation, make the resemblance, and discourse thus within yourselves: This is my seed-time, heaven is my harvest; here I must labour and toil and there rest. I see the husbandman's life is a great toil: no excellent thing can be obtained without labour, and an obstinate patience. I see the seed must be hidden in the furrows, rotten and corrupted, ere it can spring forth with any increase. Our hopes are hidden, light is sown for the righteous; all our comforts are buried under the clods, and after all this there must be long waiting, we cannot sow and reap in a day; effects cannot follow till all necessary causes have first wrought. It is not in the power of husbandmen to ripen fruits at pleasure, our times are in the hands of God, therefore it is good to wait; a long-suffering patience will reap the desired fruit. Thus you have some hints of this heavenly art of improving the creatures.

The motives inducing me to this undertaking, were the Lord's owning with some success, my labours of a like nature *, together with the desire and inclination (stirred up in me, I hope by the Spirit of the Lord) to devote my vacant hours to his service in this kind. I considered, that if the Pharisees, in a blind zeal to a faction, could compass sea and land, to proselyte men to their party, though thereby they made them sevenfold more the children of the devil than before; how much more was I obliged, by true love to God, and zeal to the everlasting happiness of souls, to use my utmost endeavours both with *seamen* and *husbandmen*, to win them to Christ, and thereby make them more than seventy-seven fold happier than before? Not to mention other encouragements to this work, which I received from the earnest desires of some reverend and worthy brethren inviting thereunto; all which I hope the event will manifest to be a call from God to this work.

I confess I met with some discouragement in my first attempt, from my unacquaintedness with rural affairs; and because I was to travel in a path (to me) untrodden; but having once engaged in it, those discouragements were soon overcome: and being now brought to what you here see, I offer to your hands these first fruits of my spare hours.

I presume you will account it no disparagement that I dedicate a

* Navigation Spiritualized.

book of husbandry to gentlemen of your quality. This is *spiritual husbandry*, which here is taught you; and yet I tell you, that great persons have accounted that civil employment (which is much inferior to this) no disparagement to them. "The king himself is served by the field," Eccles. v. 9. Or, as Montanus renders the Hebrew text, *Rex agro fit servus*; The king himself is a servant to the field. And of king Uzziah it is written, 2 Chron. xxvi. 10. "That he loved husbandry." And Amos vii. 1. we read of the king's *mowings*. Yea, Pliny hath observed, that corn was never so plentiful at Rome, as when the same men tilled the land that ruled the *commonwealth*. *Quasi gauderet terra laureato vomere, scilicet et aratore triumphali*; as though the earth itself rejoiced in the laurelled plowshare, and the triumphant plowman.

What pleasure you will find in reading it I know not; but to me it hath been a pleasant path from first to last; who yet have been at far greater expence of time and pains in compiling it, than you can be in reading it. The husbandman's work, you know, is no easy work, and the spiritualizing of it hath greater difficulties attending it; but yet the pleasure hath abundantly recompensed the pains. I have found Erasmus's observation experimentally true; *Qui literis addicti sumas, animi lassitudinem a studiis gravioribus contractam; ab iisdem studiis, sed amœnioribus recreamus*: Those that are addicted to study, (saith he) when they have wearied their spirits with study, can recreate them again with study, by making a diversion from that which is severe and knotty, to some more facile and pleasant subject.

But to hear that God hath used and honoured these papers to the good of any soul, will yield me the highest content and satisfaction imaginable.

May you but learn that lesson which is the general scope and design of this book, *viz.* How to walk with God from day to day, and make the several objects you behold, *scale et alæ*, wings and ladders to mount your souls nearer to him, who is the centre of all blessed spirits. How much will it comfort me, and confirm my hope, that it was the call of God indeed, which put me upon these endeavours!

O Sirs! What an excellent thing would it be for you, to make such holy improvements of all these earthly objects which daily occur to your senses, and cause them to proclaim and preach to you divine and heavenly mysteries; whilst others make them groan, by abusing them to sin, and subjecting them to their lusts. A man may be cast into such a condition, wherein he cannot enjoy the blessing and benefit of a pious and powerful ministry; but you cannot (ordinarily) fall into such a condition, wherein any thing (excepting a bad heart) can deprive you of the benefits and comforts of those excellent sermons, and divinity lectures, which the creatures here offer to preach and read to you.

Content not yourselves, I beseech you, with that natural sweetness the creatures afford; for thereof the beasts are capable, as much, if

not more, than you; but use them to those spiritual ends you are here directed, and they will yield you a sweetness far transcending that natural sweetness you ever relished in them; and indeed, you never use the creatures as their *Lord's*, till you come to see *your Lord* in and by them. I confess the discoveries of God in the word are far more excellent, clear, and powerful; "He hath magnified his word above all his name." And therein are the unsearchable *riches of Christ*, or rich discoveries of that grace that hath no footsteps in nature, as the apostle's expression signifies, Eph. iii. 8.

And if that which might be known of God by the creatures, leave men without excuse, as it is manifest, Rom. i. 20. how inexcusable then will those be, who have received not only the teachings of the creature, but also the grace of the gospel in vain! "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" They that are careless in the day of grace, shall be speechless in the day of judgment.

I am sensible of many defects in these papers, (as well as in myself.) They have doubtless, a taste of the distractions of the times wherein they were written; nor was I willing to keep them so long under hand as the accurateness and exactness with which such a subject ought to have been handled, did require. Had I designed my own credit, I should have observed that counsel, *Nonumque prematur in annum*, i. e. To have kept it much longer under the file, before I had exposed it to public view; but I rather inclined to Solomon's counsel, "Whatever thy hand finds out to do, do it with all thy might: for there is no wisdom, nor knowledge, nor device in the grave, whither thou art going," Eccl. ix. 10.

I apprehend a necessity of some such means to be used for the instruction and conviction of country people; who either are not capable of understanding truth in another dialect, or at least are less affected with it. The preposition in every chapter consists of an observation in husbandry; wherein, if I have failed in using any improper expression, your candour will cover it, and impute it to my unacquaintedness in rural affairs:

—————*In magnis voluisse sat est.*

The reddition or application, you will find I hope, both pertinent and close. The reflections serious, and such as (I hope) your consciences will faithfully improve. I have shut up every chapter with a *Poem*, an innocent bait to catch the reader's soul.

That of *Herbert* is experimentally true:

A verse may find him that a sermon flies,
And turn delight into a sacrifice.

I should never have been persuaded (especially in this scribbling age, wherein we may complain with the poet,

Scribimus indocti, doctique poemata passim)

to have set my dull fancy upon the rack to extort a poem to entertain my reader ; for I cannot say with Ovid, *Sponte sua carmen*, &c. but that I have been informed, that many seamen, induced by the pleasure of a verse, have taken much pains to learn the poems in their compass by heart ; and I hope both the children at home, and the servants in the fields, will learn to exercise themselves this way also. O, how much better will it be so to do, than so stuff their memories with obscene ballads, and filthy songs, which corrupt their minds, and dispose them to much wickedness, by irritating their natural corruption ! But these are purer flames, you will find nothing here of such a tendency.

'Tis guilt, not poetry, to be like those,
Whose wit in verse is downright sin in prose.
Whose studies are profaneness, as if then
They only were good poets, when bad men.

D. DIGS.

I shall add no more, but to beg that God who instructeth the husbandman in his civil calling, to teach him wisdom spiritually to improve it, particularly, that you may reap a crop of much spiritual benefit, from that seed which is here sown by the hand of the Lord's unprofitable servant, and in him,

Your very affectionate

Friend and Servant,

JOHN FLAVEL.



TO THE CHRISTIAN READER.

THERE are three things wherein (as it hath been said long before my day) the exercise of godliness doth chiefly consist : Prayer, temptation, meditation : Meditation is the subject of the following manual. The object of meditation is twofold. *First*, The word. *Secondly*, The works of God. The works of God are twofold. *First*, Internal. *Secondly*, External. The External works of God are twofold. *First*, Of creation, *Secondly*, Of providence. The works of providence are likewise twofold. *First*, In things civil, the Lord ordering and over-ruling all the affairs and motions of single persons, families, and nations, in a subserviency to his own most holy ends, designs, and purposes. *Secondly*, In things natural, the Lord instructing the husbandman to discretion, and teaching him how to dress and till the earth, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater ; as also how to breed up and manage the beasts of the field, both greater and lesser cattle, for the use and service of man.

Meditation upon this lower part of the works of God, and his wonderful providences about them, may raise our souls very high ;

and while we wisely consider these natural things, we may grow more and more wise, in and for spirituals and eternal.

The worthy and ingenious Author of the ensuing discourse hath supplied us with an excellent help, for the spiritualizing of the providential works of God in natural things, by godly meditations; we chiefly want the help of the Holy Spirit (without which all other helps and helpers are altogether insufficient) to frame and wind up our hearts for this both profitable and delightful duty; yet the help which the Lord is pleased to give us for our direction in it, by the ministry of man, is not only not to be refused, but thankfully received and improved; and all little enough to bring our minds to, or keep them at this work: The best of saints, on this side heaven, have, though they are not earthly-minded only, much earth in their minds; which like a heavy clog at their heels, or a weight at their hearts, presseth them down when they would make an essay to mount upward in meditation. We find it no easy matter to keep off earthly thoughts, when we are most seriously engaged in heavenly work; how hard is it then to get in, and be fixed upon heavenly thoughts, while we are engaged about earthly work; yea, are (for so is the husbandman) working the very earth, and raking in the bowels of it? It is a great part of our holiness to be spiritually-minded, while we are conversing with God through Jesus Christ in spiritual duties; but to be spiritually minded, and to mind spiritual things, when we are conversing with the clods of the earth, and the furrows of the field; when we have to do with corn and grass, with trees and plants, with sheep and oxen; when we behold the birds and fowls of the air, the worms, and all that creep upon the ground; then, I say, to be spiritually-minded, and thence to have our thoughts ascending, and soaring up to God, in heart-affecting and quickening contemplations, witnesseth an high degree of holiness, and of gracious attainments. To make a ladder out of the earthly materials, for the raising of ourselves in spirit up to heaven, is the *art of arts*. Holy and happy indeed are they who, being taught of God, have learned this art, and live in daily practice of it. Earthly objects usually hinder us in our way, sometimes turn us quite out of our way to heaven. Many plow and sow, dig and delve the earth, till their hearts become as earthly as the earth itself: Many deal about the beasts of the field till themselves become even brutish. Is it not then a blessed design which this Author aims and drives at, so to spiritualize all sorts, or the whole compass of earthly husbandry, that all sorts of husbandmen may become spiritual and heavenly? It seems to be a token of good, that God hath an intendment of some special good to the souls of such as are by profession proper husbandmen, seeing he hath lately put it into the hearts of two faithful *ministers (who with all of that profession, are husbandmen in a figure) to undertake, though in a different

* Mr. Richard Steel, and this Author.

way, this subject, and to publish their labours in print, that they may be of use, not only for the present age, but for posterity.

And that the husbandman may be pleased as well as profited, in perusing the labours of this author; he hath, with singular aptness and acuteness, contrived and contracted the sum and scope of every chapter into an elegant distich, or pair of verses, placed at the head of it, and concluded it with a choice melodious poem suitable to, and dilating upon the whole matter of it. These the husbandman, who can but read, may quickly learn and sing for his solace, instead of those vain ballads and corrupting rhymes, which many of that rank are apt to buy and solace themselves withal, without any benefit, yea, much to their hurt, making their hearts more corrupt, carnal, and vain thereby.

Let me add one word more to the reader. This book of Husbandry Spiritualized, is not calculated only for the common husbandman; persons of any calling, or condition, may find the author working out such searching reflections and strong convictions, from almost every part and particular of the husbandman's work, as may prove, if faithfully improved, very useful to them; to some for their awakening, to consider the state of their souls, whether in grace, or in nature; to others for their instruction, consolation, and encouragement in the ways of grace, as also for their proficiency and growth in those ways. That the blessing of the Lord, and the breathings of his good Spirit may go out with it, for all those gracious purposes, is the heart's desire and prayer of him, who is,

CHRISTIAN READER,

A sincere well-wisher to thy precious and immortal soul,

JOSEPH CARYL.

*To his Reverend and Learned Friend, Mr. JOHN FLAVEL, on his
Spiritual Navigation and Husbandry.*

LETTERS of mark to his dear servant given,
By him that sists the ruffling winds of heaven:
To fight and take all such as would not deign
T' acknowledge him the sea's great Sovereign.
He launch'd his little *pinnace*, and began
T' attack the vassals of *Leviathan*.
Auspicious gales swelling his winged sails,
Searches all creeks, and every bark he hails;
That scarce a ship our Western coast afford,
Which his brave *pinnace* has not laid aboard.

And what among our riddles some might count,
 Was seen at once at Berwick, and the *Mount*.
 Yea, in more *ports* hath in one *lustre* been,
 Than Hawkins, Drake, or Cavendish have seen.
 And prizes of more worth brought home again,
 Than all the *plate-fleets* of the kings of Spain.
 But that which makes the wonder swell the more,
 Those whom he took were *beggars* all before.
 But rests he here? No, no, our friend doth know,
 'Tis good to have two strings unto his bow.
 Our rare Amphibion loves not to be pent
 Within the bounds of one poor element.
 Besides the learned author understood,
 That of an idle hand there comes no good.
 The law to him no *pulpit* doth allow,
 And now he cannot *preach*, he means to *plow*,
 Though preaching were a crime, yet he foresaw
 Against the plowman there could be no law.
 Nor stays he on resolves, but out-of-hand
 He yokes his teem, plows up the stubborn land ;
 Sows it with precious seed, harrows again
 The tougher clods, takes pleasure in his pain.
 Whilst, Orpheus-like, (which doth his art advance)
 Rocks, fields, and woods, *after his pipe do dance*.

Industrious spirit, to what a rich account
 With thy blest Lord, with all these labours mount !
 That every nerve of thy best soul dost ply,
 To further heaven's *spiritual husbandry*.
 This kind of tillage which thou teachest us,
 Was never dreamt of by Triptolemus.
 Go, reader, turn the leaves ; and me allow
 To pray (whilst at work) *God speed the plow*.

NICHOLAS WATTS.



In Authoris Opera.

LET Paracelsus and Van Helmont's name,
 No more ride triumph on the wings of fame.
 Lo, here's a *chymist*, whose diviner skill
 Doth *hallowed* from unhallowed things distil.
 Spiritualizeth sea-affairs ; again,
 Makes the rude ground turn tutor unto men.
 Shews *Mariners*, as by a compass, how
 They may unto the *port* of glory row.

Teacheth the *plowmen*, from their work, to know
 What duties unto God and man they owe.
 Rare artist ! who, when many tongues are mute,
 Mak'st things that are inanimate confute
 The age's sins ; by preaching unto eyes,
 Truths which in other modes their ears despise.
 Prosper his pious labours, Lord ! howe'er
 Do not forget to crown the labourer.

Sic raptim canit,

DAN. CONDY.

To his Reverend and Invaluable Friend, Mr. J. F. upon his Husbandry Spiritualized.

INGENIOUS Sir, what do I see ? what now !
 Are you come from the pulpit to the plow ?
 If so, then pardon me, if I profess,
 The plow deserves to be sent to the press.
 'Tis not long since you went to sea, they say,
 Compos'd a compass which directs the way,
 And steers the course to heaven ; O blest art !
 And bravely done that you did that impart
 To us, who take it kindly at your hand,
 And bless the Lord that you are come to land,
 To be an husbandman, wherein your skill,
 With admiration doth your readers fill.
 One grain will yield increase, 'tis ten times ten,
 When the earth's manur'd by such husbandmen.
 We may expect rich harvests, and full crops,
 When heavenly dew descendeth in such drops
 Of spiritual rain, to water every field,
 That it full heaps of grace to God may yield.
 I must adore the wisdom of that God
 That makes men wise, who, even from a clod
 of earth, can raise such heavenly meditation
 Unto a pitch of highest elevation.
 Besides, I mark the goodness of the Lord,
 Performing unto us his faithful word,
 That all should work for good unto the saints,
 Which, in some measure, lessens our complaints.
 For though our pulpit-mercies be grown less,
 We have some gracious helps yet from the press.
 And herein all the world may plainly see,
 That faithful servants will not idle be.

We have some bricks, although the straw be gone,
 The church, at last, shall be of polish'd stone.
 Whatever men or devils act or say,
 Sion, at last, will have a glorious day.
 The wretched muck-worm, that from morn to night
 Labours, as if 'twere for an heav'nly weight ;
 And, when he hath got all he can, the most
 Amounts to little more than a poor crust,
 To feed his tir'd carcase : If himself
 Have, by his carking, got a little pelf,
 Leave it he must, to one he knows not whom,
 And then must come to an eternal doom ;
 And hear his poor neglected, wretched soul
 Tell him at last that he hath play'd the fool.
 But here he's taught, how he, before he die,
 May lay up treasure for eternity ;
 Wherein he may be rich, yea, much, much more,
 Than they that do possess whole mines of ore.
 When earth's more worth than heav'n, and gold than grace,
 Then let the worldling run his brutish race ;
 But not before, unless he do intend
 To meet with soul-destruction in the end.
 But I must leave him, and return again
 To gratulate the author for his pain.
 And here I can't forbear to bid my pen
 To tell the world of all the husbandmen,
 That e'er I met, he, he hath hit the vein
 To recompense the labourer's hard pain,
 And taught him how to get the greatest gain.
 Wherein he treads a path not trode before ;
 By which, indeed, his skill appears the more.
 I might *encomiums* give him, great and true,
 And yet come very short of what's his due ;
 But I must not walk in forbidden ways,
 For thereby I am sure, I should displease
 His pious mind, who doth, and freely can
 Give all the praise to the great husbandman ;
 Who will his graces in his servants own,
 But doth expect himself to wear the crown.

Farewell, dear Sir, I take my leave, and now,
 Will say no more than this, *God speed the plow.*

EDWARD JEFFERY.

The EPISTLE, to the intelligent Country READER.

THOU hast here the fruit of some of my spare hours, which
 were thus employed, when, by a sad providence, I was thrust

from the society of many dear friends, into a solitary country-dwelling. I hope none will envy me these innocent delights, which I made out of my lonely walks, whereby the Lord sweetened my solitudes there. It is like thou wilt find some passages here, that are harmlessly pleasant; yet, I assure thee, I know of none that the most *Cynical Reader* can censure, as sinfully light and vain. I must acknowledge, to the praise of God, that I have found some of those (which, possibly, some of my readers will call the slightest and most trifling subjects of meditation) to be the ordinances for instruction, caution and consolation to my own soul; yea, such a degree of comfort, I do profess to have found by these things, as hath much endeared the country-life to me, and made me much better to understand that saying of Horace, than when I learned it at school,

Novistine locum potiolem rure beato?

Est ubi plus tepeant hycms? Ubi gravior aura?

O rus, quando ego te adspiciam? Quandoque licebit

Nunc veterum libris, nunc somno, et inertibus hortis

Ducere solitæ jucunda oblivio vitæ, (i. e.)

What life can with the country life compare?

Where breathes the purest, and most healthful air.

Where, undisturb'd, my study I pursue,

And, when I sleep, bid all my cares adieu. *Hor. Sat. 6.*

And what I have found so beneficial to myself, I cannot but think may be so to others. I assure thee, reader, I am not fond of any of these conceptions; and yet I think I may modestly enough say, That the emptiest leaf of this book may serve for more, and better uses, than a mere diversion, when thou canst find leisure to peruse it. I know, your troubles and cares are many; and though your condition of life hath many innocent comforts and outward mercies to sweeten it, yet I believe most of you have found that ancient saying of Anacreon experimentally true: *Εχρει το πικρον της γεωργιας γλυκυ.*

‘Some bitter troubles countrymen do meet,

‘Wherewith the Lord doth intermix their sweet.’

The *cares* of your *minds* are commonly no less than the *pains* of your *bodies*; it concerns you, therefore, to *sweeten* what you cannot *avoid*; and I know no better way for that, than what is here directed to. O friends! what advantages have you for a spiritual life? Why may you not have two harvests every year? One for your souls, another for your bodies; if you could thus learn to husband your husbandry. Methinks spiritual meditations do even put themselves upon you. Husbandmen of old were generally presumed to be honest and good men; what else means that saying of Menander, *Αγροικοι ειναι προσποιηται τονηρος ων.*

‘Profess thyself an husbandman,

‘And wicked too! believe’t that can!’

What you are, godly or wicked, is not for me (that am a stranger to most of you) to determine; but if you are not godly, it is my de-

sire and design to make you so: and I could not think on a more probable mean to accomplish this honest design, than what I have here used. Methinks it should be a pleasure to you, when you come weary out of the fields from plough, or any other labour, to sit down in the evening, and read that chapter which concerns that particular business, and refresh your souls, even from that which hath wearied your bodies. Were your hearts but heavenly, and more time allowed for spiritual husbandry, your inward comforts would be much more, and your outward gains not a jot less; for if the success of all your civil labours and employments depend upon the pleasure and will of God, (as all that are not atheists do acknowledge) then, certainly, your business can succeed never the worse for your endeavours to please him, upon whose pleasure it so entirely depends. I have many times lifted up my heart to heaven, whilst these papers were under my hand, for a special blessing to accompany them, when they should be in yours. If the Lord accomplish my desires by them upon your souls you shall enjoy two heavens, one here, and another hereafter. Would not that be sweet? The historian tells us, that Altitius Serarius was sowing corn in the field, when Q. Cincinnatus came to him bare-headed with letters from the senate, signifying, that he was chosen to the dictatorship. I hope the Lord will so bless and succeed these labours, that many of you will be called from holding the *plough* on earth, to wear the *crown* of glory in heaven; which is the sincere desire of

Your hearty well-wisher,

JOHN FLAVEL.

The AUTHOR to the READER.

COME you, whose listening ears do even itch
 To hear the way prescrib'd of growing rich;
 I'll shew you how to make your tenements
 Ten thousand times more worth, and yet your rents
 Not rais'd a farthing; here my reader sees
 A way to make his dead and barren trees
 Yield precious fruit; his sheep, though ne'er so bad,
 Bear golden fleeces, such ne'er Jason had:
 In every thing your gain shall more than double,
 And all this had with far less toil and trouble.
 Methinks I hear thee say, This cannot be,
 I'll ne'er believe it. Well, read on and see.
 Reader, hadst thou but senses exercis'd
 To judge aright; were spiritual things but priz'd
 At their just value, thou would'st quickly say,

'Tis so indeed; thou wouldst not go thy way
 Like one that's disappointed, and so fling
 The book aside. *I thought 'twas some such thing.*
 Time was when country Christians did afford
 More hours and pains about God's holy word:
 Witness the man who did most gladly pay
 For some few leaves his whole cart-load of hay.
 And time shall be, when heavenly truth that warms
 The heart, shall be preferr'd before your farms;
 When holiness, as sacred scripture tells,
 Shall be engraven on the horses bells.
 Lord, hasten on those much desired times,
 And, to that purpose, bless those rural rhymes.



THE PROEM.

1 COR. iii. 9. *Ye are God's Husbandry.*

THE scope and design of the following chapters, being the spiritual improvement of husbandry, it will be necessary, by way of *proem*, to acquaint the reader with the foundation, and general rules of this art in the scriptures, thereby to procure greater respect unto, and prevent prejudices against composures of this kind.

To this end, I shall entertain the reader a little while upon what this scripture affords, which will give a fair introduction to the following discourse.

The apostle's scope in the context being to check and repress the vain glory and emulation of the Corinthians, who, instead of thankfulness for, and an humble and diligent improvement of the excellent blessings of the ministry, turned all into vain ostentation and emulation, one preferring Paul, and another Apollos; in the mean time depriving themselves of the choice blessings they might have received from them both.

To cure this growing mischief in the churches, he checks their vanity, and discovers the evil of such practices by several arguments, amongst which this is one,

Ye are God's Husbandry, q. d.

What are ye, but a field or plot of ground, to be manured and cultivated for God? And what are Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, but so many workmen and labourers, employed by God, the great Husbandman, to plant and water you all?

If, then, you shall glory in some, and despise others, you take the ready way to deprive yourselves of the benefits and mercies you might receive from the joint ministry of them all. God hath used me to plant you, and Apollos to water you; you are obliged to bless him for

the ministry of both, and it will be your sin if you despise either. If the workmen be discouraged in their labours, it is the field that loses and suffers by it; so the words are a similitude, serving to illustrate the relation,

1. Which the churches have to God.

2. Which God's ministers have to the churches.

1. The relation betwixt God and them is like that of an husbandman to his ground or tillage. The Greek word signifies God's * *arable*, or that plot of ground which God manures by the ministry of pastors and teachers.

2. It serves to illustrate the relation that the ministers of Christ sustain to the churches, which is like that of the husbandman's servants to him and his fields; which excellent notion carries in it the perpetual necessity of a gospel ministry. (For what fruit can be expected, where there are none to till the ground?) As also the diligence, accountableness, and rewards which these labourers are to give to, and receive from God, the great Husbandman. All runs into this,

That the life and employment of an husbandman, excellently shadows forth the relation betwixt God and his church, and the relative duties betwixt its ministers and members.

Or more briefly thus:

The church is God's husbandry, about which his ministers are employed.

I shall not here observe my usual method, (intending no more but a preface to the following discourse) but only open the particulars wherein the resemblance consists; and then draw some Corollaries from the whole. The first I shall dispatch in these twenty particulars following:

1. *Prop.* The husbandman purchases his fields, and gives a valuable consideration for them, Jer. xxxii. 9, 10.

Reddit. So hath God purchased his church with a full valuable price, even the precious blood of his own Son, Acts xx. 28. "Feed the church of God which he hath purchased, or acquired with his own blood." O dear-bought inheritance! how much doth this bespeak its worth! Or rather, the high esteem God hath of it, to pay down blood, and such blood for it; never was any inheritance bought at such a rate: every particular elect person, and none but such are comprehended in this purchase; the rest still remain in the devil's right. Sin made a forfeiture of all to justice, upon which Satan entered, and took possession, and, as the strong man armed, still keeps it in them, Luke xi. 21. but upon payment of this sum to justice, the elect (who only are intended in this purchase) pass over into God's right and property, and now are neither Satan's, Acts xxvi. 18.

* The faithful (or believers) are called God's husbandry, (*γεωργίαν, georgeon*) because God cultivates them as land by means of spiritual teachers (or pastors) *Rav.*

nor their own, 1 Cor. vi. 19. but the *Lord's peculiar*, 1 Pet. ii. 6. And to shew how much they are his own, you have two *possessives* in one verse. Cant. viii. 12. "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me, mine, which is mine."

2. *Prop.* Husbandmen divide and separate their own lands from other men's, they have their land-marks and boundaries, by which property is preserved, Deut. xxvii. 17. Prov. xxii. 28.

Reddit. So are the people of God wonderfully separated and distinguished from all the people of the earth. Psal. iv. 3. "The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself. And the Lord knoweth who are his," 2 Tim. ii. 19. It is a special act of grace, to be inclosed by God out of the waste howling wilderness of the world, Deut. xxxiii. 16. This did God *intentionally*, in the decree before the world was; which decree is executed in their sanctification and adoption.

3. *Prop.* Corn-fields are carefully fenced by the husbandman with hedges and ditches, to preserve their fruits from beasts that would otherwise over-run and destroy them——*Non minor est virtus quam quærere parta tueri.* It is as good husbandry to keep what we have, as to acquire more than we had.

Reddit. "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill, and he fenced it," Isa. v. 1, 2. No inheritance is better defended and secured, than the Lord's inheritance, Psal. cxxv. 2. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people." So careful is he for their safety, "that he createth upon every dwelling-place of mount Sion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence," Isa. iv. 5. Not a particular saint, but is hedged about and inclosed in arms of power and love, Job i. 10. "Thou hast made a hedge about him," The devil fain would, but by his own confession could not break over the hedge to touch Job, till God's permission made a gap for him: yea, he not only made an hedge, but a wall about them, and that of fire, Zech. ii. 5. Sets a guard of angels "to encamp round about them that fear him," Psal. xxxiv. 7. And will not trust them with a single guard of angels neither, though their power be great, and love to the saints as great; but watches over them himself also, Isa. xxvii. 2, 3. "Sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine, I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

4. *Prop.* Husbandmen carry out their compost, to fertilize their arable ground, they dung it, dress it, and keep it in heart; and in these western parts are at great charges to bring lime, and salt-water-sand to quicken their thin and cold soil.

Reddit. "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well, if not, cut it down," Luke xiii. 8. O the rich dressing which God bestows upon his churches!

they are costly fields indeed, dressed and fertilized, not only by precious ordinances and providences, but also by the sweat, yea, blood of the dispensers of them. "You Londoners (saith Mr. Lockier in *Colos.* p. 552.) are trees watered choicely indeed; it is storied of the palm-tree, that at its first transplanting into Italy, it was watered with wine. I cannot say (saith he) that you have been so watered by me, I dare not; but this I can humbly and truly say, that if our choicest strength and spirits may be named instead of water, wine; or if the blessing which hath gone along with these waters, at any time, hath turned them into wine, in vigour upon your souls, then hath God by me, watered your roots with wine."

5. *Prop.* The husbandman builds his house, where he makes his purchase, dwells upon his land, and frequently visits it; he knows that such as dwell far from their *lands*, are not far from *loss*.

Reddit. So doth God; wherever he plants a church, there doth he fix his habitation, intending there to dwell, Psalm xlv. 5. "God is in the midst of her," she shall not be moved. Thus God came to dwell upon his own fee and inheritance, in Judea, Lev. xxvi. 11, 12. "And I will set my tabernacle amongst you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." Which promise is again renewed to his churches of the New Testament, 2 Cor. vi. 16. And when the churches shall be in their greatest flourish and purity, then shall there be the fullest and most glorious manifestation of the divine presence among them, Rev. xxi. 3. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and be their God." Hence the assemblies are called, the places of his feet—And there they "behold the beauty of the Lord," Psalm xxvii.

6. *Prop.* Husbandmen grudge not at the cost they are at for their tillage; but as they lay out vast sums upon it, so they do it cheerfully.

Reddit. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard; what could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? And as he bestows upon his heritage the choicest mercies, so he doth it with the greatest cheerfulness; for he saith, Jer. xxxii. 41. "I will rejoice over them to do them good; and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart and with my whole soul." It is not the giving out of mercy (saith one) that grieveth God, but the recoiling of his mercy back again upon him by the creature's ingratitude.

7. *Prop.* When husbandmen have been at cost and pains about their husbandry, they expect fruit from it, answerable to their pains and expences about it: "Behold (said James) the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth," Jam. v. 7.

Reddit. "And he looked that it should bring forth fruit," Isa. v.

2. This heavenly Husbandman waits for the fruits of his fields also ; never did any husbandman long for the desired harvest, more than God doth for the fruits of holiness from his saints : Great are the expectations of God from his people : “ And when the time of the “ fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they “ might receive the fruits of it.”

8. *Prop.* Husbandmen are much delighted, to see the success of their labours ; it comforts them over all their hard pains, and many weary days to see a good increase.

Reddit. Much more is God delighted in beholding the flourishing graces of his people ; it pleases him to see his plants laden with fruit, and his valleys sing with corn, Cant. vi. 2. “ My beloved is gone “ down to the garden, into his beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, “ and to gather lilies.” These beds of spices (say * expositors) are the particular churches, the companies of believers ; he goes to feed in these gardens, like as men go to their gardens to make merry, or to gather fruit, Cant. iv. 16. “ He eats his pleasant fruit,” viz. His people’s holy performances, sweeter to him than any *ambrosio* ; thus he feeds in the gardens, and he gathers lilies when he translates good souls into his kingdom above ; “ For the Lord taketh pleasure “ in his saints, and will beautify the meek with salvation.”

9. *Prop.* The husbandman is exceedingly grieved when he sees the hopes of a good crop disappointed, and his fields prove barren, or blasted.

Reddit. So the Lord expresses his grief for, and anger against his people, when they bring forth no fruits, or wild fruits, worse than none, Hosea ix. 16. “ Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up.” Christ was exceedingly displeased with the fig-tree, and cursed it for its barrenness ; it grieves him to the heart when his servants return to him with such complaints as these, “ We have laboured in “ vain, we have spent our strength for nought.”

10. *Prop.* Husbandmen employ many labourers to work in their fields, there is need of many hands for such a multiplicity of business.

Reddit. God hath diversity of workmen also in the churches whom he sends forth to labour in his spiritual fields, Eph. iv. 12. “ He gave “ some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some “ pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work “ of the ministry,” Amos iii. 7. I have sent [*my servants*] *the prophets*. It is usual with the apostles to place this title of a servant among their honorary titles, though a profane mouth once called it, *probrosum artificium*, a sordid artifice. Christ hath stamp’t a great deal of dignity upon his ministers, in retaining them for the nearest service to himself, 1 Cor. iv. 1. “ Let a man so account of us, as the “ ministers of Christ ;” they are workers together with God : The

* Christ is fed when he sees the graces of his people ; he gathers lilies when he translates any good soul out of this life. *Trap. on the place.*

husbandman works in the field among his labourers, and the great God disdaineth not to work in, and with his poor servants, in the work of the ministry.

11. *Prop.* The work about which husbandmen employ their servants in the field, is toilsome and spending, you see they come home at night as weary as they can draw their legs after them.

Reddit. But God's workmen have a much harder task than they; hence are they set forth in scripture by the laborious ox, 1 Cor. ix. 9. Rev. iv. 7. Some derive the word *διακονος*, *deacon*, from *κονος*, which signifies dust, to shew the laboriousness of their employment, labouring till even choaked with dust and sweat. It is said of Epaphroditus, Phil. ii. 13. "That for the work of Christ he was sick, and nigh unto death; not regarding his life, to supply their lack of service." The apostle's expression, Col. i. *ult.* is very emphatical, "Whereunto I also labour, striving, according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." The word *αγωνιζομενος*, signifies such spending labour as puts a man into an agony; and blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

12. *Prop.* The immediate end of the husbandman's labour, and his servants labour is for the improvement of his land, to make it more flourishing and fruitful.

Reddit. The scope and end of the ministry is for the church's benefit and advantage. They must not lord it over God's heritage, as if the church were for them, and not they for the church; nor serve themselves of it, but be the church's servants for Jesus sake, 2 Cor. iv. 6. The power they have received being for edification, and not for destruction, 2 Cor. x. 8. Christ hath given them to the churches; their gifts, their time, their strength, and all their ministerial talents, are not their own, but the church's stock and treasure.

13. *Prop.* The workmen that labour in the fields are accountable for their work to him that employed them.

Reddit. Church-officers are also accountable to God for all the souls committed to them. They are stewards of the mysteries of God, 1 Cor. iv. 1. and stewards are accountable. "We watch for your souls, (saith the apostle) as they that must give an account," Heb. xiii. 7. If these servants be unfaithful in their work and trust, the blood of souls shall be required at their hands, Ezek. iii. 17, 18. which are *fulmina, non verba*, (saith Erasmus) thunderbolts rather than words. The guilt of blood is the greatest guilt; and of all blood, the blood of souls.

14. *Prop.* Those that spend their time and strength all their days, in manuring and plowing in the fields, do maintain themselves and their families by their labours; their hands are sufficient for themselves and theirs.

Reddit. "Even so hath God ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live by the gospel," 1 Cor. ix. 14. "The work,

“man is worthy of his meat,” Mat. x. 10. It is a sad thing, if those who break the bread of life to souls, should be suffered to want bread themselves. God would not have the mouth of an ox muzzled that treads out the corn, but have liberty to eat as well as work. Yet if any pretended to the ministry be like the heifer, that loves to tread out the corn, i. e. cares to do no work, but such as brings in present pay; he therein sufficiently discovers his beast-like disposition. Ministers must be faithful in their Master’s work, and if men do not, God will reward them. For “he is not unrighteous to forget their “work, and labour of love,” Heb. vi. 10.

15. *Prop.* It is a great trouble to husbandmen in a busy time, to be put off from their labours by stormy weather, which drives them out of the fields, and makes them let all lie, till it clear up again; yet mean while, they are not idle, but employ themselves in home-work.

Reddit. Even so in God’s husbandry, it is an unspeakable affliction to God’s workmen to be rendered useless and unserviceable to the churches, by those storms of trouble, which drive them from their public ministerial work. With what a heavy heart did Paul go off from his work at Ephesus, Acts xx. It spends a minister to preach, but more to be silent. It is a loud speaking judgment, when God shall say to them as to Ezekiel, “Son of man, I will make thy “tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, and thou shalt be dumb,” Ezek. iii. 26. Such silencing providences, speak thundering language to gracious hearts; yet, even then, the keepers of the vineyard have a private vineyard of their own to look after, they have much home-work, when no out-work.

16. *Prop.* There is a vast difference betwixt those fields which have been well husbanded and dressed by a skilful and diligent husbandman; and those that have been long out of husbandry. How fragrant is the one? How dry and barren the other? When you pass by a field well dressed and fenced, every thing prosperous, and in exquisite order, you may know, without farther enquiry, that a good husbandman lives there.

Reddit. Thus stands the case betwixt those places which God hath blessed with a faithful, painful ministry, and such as have none, or worse than none: for as the husbandman’s cost and pains appear in the verdant and fragrant hue of his fields; so a minister’s pains and diligence are ordinarily seen in the heavenly lives, and flourishing graces of the people. The churches of Corinth and Thessalonica, where Paul and other holy instruments spent much of their time and pains, became famous and flourishing churches, 2 Cor. ix. 2. A special blessing comes along with a godly minister, to the place where special providence assigns him. Such places, like Gideon’s fleece, have the dew of heaven lying on them, whilst others round about dre dry and barren.

17. *Prop.* The husbandman is not discouraged, though the seed

lie long under the clods; he knows it will spring up at the last, and reward him, or those that come after him, for their pains and patience in waiting for it.

Reddit. Ministers should not be presently discouraged in their work, because they see but little or no appearance of all the seed they have sown among the people. The "servant of the Lord must be "patient towards all, waiting if at any time God will give them repentance," 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. And if it never spring up in his time, it may after his death; and if so, he shall not fail of his reward, John iv. 36, 37. "And he that reapeth, receiveth wages, "and gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both he that soweth, and "he that reapeth, may rejoice together; and herein is that saying "true, one soweth, and another reapeth." Though ministers die, yet their words live; yea, their words take hold of men when they are in the dust, Zech. i. 6.

18. *Prop.* Husbandmen find low grounds and vallies, most fertile; hills, how lofty soever they overtop the lower grounds, yet answer not the husbandman's pains as the vallies do: these are best watered and secured from the scorching heat of the sun.

Reddit. Experience shews us, that the humblest saints are most fruitful under the gospel; "These are they that receive with meekness the engrafted word," James i. 21. whose influences abide in them, as the rain doth in the low vallies. Happy is that minister, whose lot falls in such a pleasant valley. "Blessed are they that sow "beside all such waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox "and the ass," Isa. xxxii. 20. among these vallies run the pleasant springs and purling brooks, which fertilize the neighbouring ground. Heavenly ordinances there, leave fruitful influences.

19. *Prop.* The first crop is usually the best, and the longer the husbandman tills his ground, the less it produces; after a few years its vigour and strength is spent.

Reddit. The first entertainment of the gospel is commonly the best; and what good is done by the ministry is often done at its first entrance. New things are pretty, and very taking. "John at first "was to the Jews a burning and shining light, and they were willing "[for a season] to rejoice in his light," John v. 35. Paul was highly valued among the Galatians at first; such was their zeal, that they could have plucked out their eyes, and have given them to him! but how quickly did this full tide ebb again? For he complains, Gal. iv. 15. "Where then is the blessedness ye spake of?"

20. *Prop. Lastly,* When fields prove barren, and will not quit the husbandman's cost, nor answer the seed he sows in them, he plucks up the hedges, and lays it waste.

Reddit. So when churches grow formal and fruitless, the Lord removes his gospel-presence from them, plucks up the hedge of his protection from about them, and lays them open as waste ground to

be over-run by their enemies. Jer. vii. 12. "Go to Shiloh, and see "what I did unto it." What is become of those once famous and flourishing churches of Asia? Are they not laid waste, and trodden down by infidels? And now go to, saith the great Husbandman, "I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will pull up the "hedge thereof, and it shall be laid waste," Isa. v. 5.

Thus you see the allegory opened in its particulars: from the whole, I shall present you with these five ensuing *corollaries*.

The first Corollary.

How great then are the dignities and privileges of the churches of Jesus Christ whom he hath appropriated to himself, above all the people of the earth, to be his peculiar inheritance? The rest of the world is a waste wilderness; all other places, how pleasant soever, in respect of their natural amenity and delights, are truly enough called the dark places of the earth; dismal, solitary cells, where *Ziim* and *Iim*, *Bit-terns*, *Cormorants*, and every doleful creature dwells. But the church is the paradise of the earth, *a garden inclosed*, Cant. iv. 12. in whose hedges the gospel birds chirp and sing melodiously, Cant. ii. 12. Its beds are beds of spices, Cant. vi. 2. and betwixt its pleasant banks, a crystal river of living water runs, Rev. xxii. 1. the streams whereof make glad the city of God, in the midst whereof the Lord himself delights to walk. O *Zion*, with what pleasures doth thou abound? If Bernard was so ravished with the delights of his *monastery*, because of its green banks, and shady bowers, and herbs, and trees, and various objects to feed his eyes, and fragrant smells, and sweet and various tunes of birds, together with the opportunities of devout contemplation, that he cried out admiringly, *Lord! what delight dost thou provide, even for the poor!* How much more should we be ravished with *Zion's* glory? For, *beautiful for situation is mount Zion*. Of whom it may much more truly be said, what a * *chronicler* of our own once said of England, That it is the fortunate island, the paradise of pleasure, the garden of God, whose vallies are like Eden, whose hills are as Lebanon, whose springs are as *Pisgah*, whose rivers are as *Jordan*, whose wall is the ocean, and whose defence is the Lord *Jehovah*. Happy art thou, O *Israel*; who is like unto thee? Who can count the privileges wherewith Christ hath invested his churches? O let it never seem a light thing in our eyes, that we grow within his blessed inclosure. How sweet a promise is that, *Exod. xix. 5*. "Ye "shall be to me a peculiar treasure, above all people; for all the "earth is mine."

The second Corollary.

Hence it follows, That spiritual barrenness is a great reproach and shame to Christians. Shall God's husbandry, which is planted, watered, fenced, filled with favours and mercies, be like the barren heath in the desert? Surely it should be said of every soul that grows here,

* *Speed's Chronicle.*

as the historian saith of Spain, that there is *nihil infructuosum, nihil sterile* ; nothing barren or unfruitful in it. God's vineyard is planted in a very fruitful hill. Isa. v. 1. "And surely they that are planted in the house of the Lord, should flourish in the courts of our God ; they should bring forth fruit, even in old age, to shew that God is upright," Psal. xcii. 13, 14. "They are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath ordained they should walk in," Eph. ii. 10. "They are married unto Christ, that they might bring forth fruit to God," Rom. vii. 4. An empty branch is a dishonour to the root that bears it, a barren field to the husbandman that owns it ; God cannot endure that in his fields which he suffers in the wilderness.

The third Corollary.

If the church be God's husbandry, then there is such a special, gracious presence of the Lord in his churches, as is not to be found in all the world beside. Where may you expect to find the husbandman but in his own fields ? There lies his business, and there he delights to be. And where may we expect to find God but in the assemblies of his saints ? "He walks among the golden candlesticks," Rev. ii. 1. I will walk among you, (saith he) and be your God, 2 Cor. vi. 16. Upon this account the church is called *Jehovah Shammah*, the Lord is there, Ezek. xlviii. ult. You may see the footsteps of God in the creatures, but the face of God is only to be seen in his ordinances. Hence, Psal. xxvii. 4. "David longed for the temple, that he might see the beauty of the Lord. Now what is beauty, but a symmetry and proportion of parts ? In the works of creation you see one attribute manifested in one thing, and another in another thing ; but in the *sanctuary* you may see beauty, even in all the attributes of God displayed there : And, indeed, we find in scripture such astonishing expressions about the visions of God in his church, that in reading them, a man can see little difference betwixt it and heaven ; for as the church is called heaven, Mat. xxv. 1. so its description is like that of heaven. Heb. xii. 22, 23. "You are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels," &c. And Rev. xxii. 4. "They shall see his face, and his name shall be written in their foreheads." And ver. 6. The saints are represented "standing nearer to the throne of God than the angels themselves." Hence also ordinances are called galleries, in which both saints and angels walk, beholding the glory of him that sits upon the throne. Zech. iii. 7. "If you will keep my ways, I will give you galleries to walk in among them that stand by."

The fourth Corollary.

If the church be God's husbandry, then those that be employed in ministerial work ought to be men of great judgment and experience in soul affairs ; for these are the labourers whom God, the mystical Husbandman employs and entrusts about his spiritual husband.

ry. Should husbandman employ ignorant persons, that neither understand the rules nor proper seasons of husbandry; how much would such workmen damnify and prejudice him? He will not employ such to weed his fields, as know not wheat from tares; or to prune his trees, that think *midsummer* as fit for that work as December: much less will God. He qualifies all that he sends with wisdom for their work. "His workmen approve themselves workmen" indeed, such as need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of "truth," 2 Tim. ii. 15. As Bezaleel was furnished with wisdom before he was employed in tabernacle-work; so Christ instructs his servants with skill and insight, before they are employed in ministerial work. He gives them a mouth and wisdom, Luke xxi. 15. endues them with power from on high; as Christ was filled abundantly with the Spirit for his work, so, according to proportion, are those that are sent by him. John xx. 21, 22. "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you." And as for those that run before they are sent, and understand not the mysteries of the gospel; I shall say no more of them but this; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The fifth Corollary.

To conclude, If the church be God's husbandry, that is, if husbandry have so many resemblances of God's works about the church in it; then how inexcusable is the ignorance of husbandmen in the things of God, who, besides the word of the gospel, have the teaching of the creatures; and can hardly turn their hands to any part of their work, but the Spirit hints one spiritual use or other from it to their souls? How do the scriptures abound with parables and lively similitudes taken from husbandry? From the field, the seed, the plow, the barn, from threshing and winnowing; similitudes also from planting, grafting, and pruning of *trees*; and not a few from the ordering of cattle. So that to what business soever you turn your hands, in any part of your calling, still God meets you with one heavenly instruction or other. But alas! How few are able to improve their civil employments to such excellent ends! these things are but briefly hinted in the scriptures, and those hints scattered up and down, that they know not where to find them; and if they could, yet would it be difficult so to methodize them, as it is necessary they should be, in order to their due improvement by meditation.

And therefore I judged it necessary to collect and prepare them for your use; and in this manner to present them to you as you find them in the following chapters. Read, consider, and apply; and the Lord make you good husbandmen for your own souls.

THE FIRST PART OF
HUSBANDRY SPIRITUALIZED.

CHAP. I

Upon the Industry of the Husbandman.

*In the laborious Husbandman you see,
What all true Christians are, or ought to be.*

OBSERVATION.

THE employment of the husbandman is by all acknowledged to be very laborious; there is a multiplicity of business incumbent on him. The end of one work is but the beginning of another, every season of the year brings its proper work with it: sometimes you find him in his *fields*, dressing, plowing, sowing, harrowing, weeding, or reaping; and sometimes in his *barn*, threshing or winnowing; sometimes in his *orchard*, planting, grafting, or pruning his trees; and sometimes among his *cattle*; so that he hath no time to be idle. As he hath a multiplicity of business, so every part of it is full of toil and spending labour: he eats not the bread of idleness, but earns it before he eats it; and, as it were, dips it in his own sweat, whereby it becomes the sweeter to him. Though sin brought in the husbandman's sweat, Gen. iii. 19. yet now not to sweat would increase his sin, Ezek. xvi. 49.

APPLICATION.

Behold here the life of a serious Christian, shadowed forth to the life. As the life of a husbandman, so the life of a Christian is no idle nor easy life. They that take up religion for *ostentation*, and not for an *occupation*, and those that place the business of it in notions and idle speculations, in forms, gestures, and external observances, may think and call it so: but such as devote themselves unto it, and make religion their business, will find it no easy work to exercise themselves to godliness. Many there are that affect the reputation and *sweet* of it who cannot endure the labour and *sweat* of it. If men might be indulged to divide their heart betwixt God and the world, or to cull out the cheap and easy duties of it, and neglect the more difficult and costly ones, it were an easy thing to be a Christian: but surely to have a respect to all God's commandments, to live the life, as well as speak the language of a Christian; to be holy in all manner of conversation, is not so easy. This will be evident, by

comparing the life of a Christian with the life of a husbandman, in these five particulars ; wherein it will appear, that the work of a Christian is by much the harder work of the two.

1. The husbandman hath much to do, many things to look after ; but the Christian more : if we respect the extensiveness of his work, he hath a large field indeed to labour in, Psal. cxix. 96. “ Thy commandment is exceeding broad,” of a vast extent and latitude, comprizing not only a multitude of external acts and duties, and guiding the offices of the outward man about them, but also taking in every thought and motion of the inner man within its compass.

You find in the word, a world of work cut out for Christians ; there is hearing-work, praying-work, reading, meditating, and self-examining-work ; it puts him also upon a constant watch over all the corruptions of his heart. Oh, what a world of work hath a Christian about him ? For of them he may say, as the historian doth of Hannibal, they are never quiet, whether conquering or conquered. How many weak, languishing graces hath he to recover, improve, and strengthen ? There is a weak faith, a languishing love, dull and faint desires, to be quickened and invigorated. And when all this is done, what a multitude of work do his several relations exact from him ? He hath a world of business incumbent on him, as a parent, child, husband, wife, master, servant, or friend, yea, not only to friends, but enemies. And, besides all this, how many difficult things are there to be borne and suffered for Christ ? And yet God will not allow his people to neglect any one of them : neither can he be a Christian that hath not respect to every command, and is not holy in all manner of conversation, Psal. cxix. 6. 2 Pet. iii. 11. every one of these duties, like the several spokes in a wheel, come to bear, in the whole round of a Christian’s conversation : so that he hath more work upon his hands than the husbandman.

2. The husbandman’s work is confessed to be spending work, but not like the Christian’s. What Augustus said of the young Roman, is verified in the true Christian, *Quicquid vult, valde vult*. Whatsoever he doth in religion, he doth to purpose. Under the law, God rejected the *snail* and the *ass*, Lev. xi. 30. Exod. xiii. 13. And under the gospel, he allows no sluggish lazy professor, 1 Tim. v. 11, 13. Sleepy duties are utterly unsuitable to the living God ; he will have the very spirits distilled and offered up to him in every duty, John iv. 24. he bestows upon his people the very substance and kernel of mercies, and will not accept from them the shells and shadows of duties ; not the skin, but the inwards, and the fat that covereth the inwards, were required under the law, Exod. xxix. 30. And every sacrifice under the gospel, must be *sacrificium medullatum*, a sacrifice full of marrow ; observe the manner in which their work is to be performed.

Rom. xii. 11. In serving God, fervent in spirit, or hissing hot.

2 Pet. i. 10. In securing salvation, diligent ; or doing it thoroughly and enough.

1 Tim. iv. 7. In godliness, exercising or stripping themselves ; as for a race.

Luke xiii. 24. In the pursuit of happiness, striving even to an agony.

Acts xxvi. 7. In prayer, serving God instantly ; or in a stretched out manner ; yea, pouring out their hearts before him, Psal. lxii. 8. as if the body were left like a dead corpse upon the knees, whilst the spirit is departed from it, and ascended to God. This is the manner of his work : judge then how much harder this work is, than to spend the sweat of the brow in manual labour.

3. The husbandman finds his work as he left it, he can begin one day where he left the other ; but it is not so with the Christian ; a bad heart and a busy devil, disorder and spoil his work every day. The Christian finds not his heart in the morning, as he left it at night ; and even when he is about his work, how many set-backs doth he meet with ? Satan stands at his right hand (the working hand) to resist him, Zech. iii. 1. when he would do good, evil (the evil of his own heart and nature) is present with him.

4. The husbandman hath some resting-days, when he throws aside all his work, and takes his recreation ; but the Christian hath no resting-day, till his dying-day ; and then he shall rest from his labours. Religion allows no idle day, “ but requires him to be always abounding in the work of the Lord,” 1 Cor. xv. 18. When one duty is done, another calls for him ; the Lord’s day is a day of rest to the husbandman, but no day in the week so laborious to the Christian. O it is a spending day to him. When he hath gathered in the crop of one duty, he is not to sit down satisfied therewith, or say as that rich worldling did, Luke xii. 19. “ Soul, take thine ease, “ thou hast goods laid up for many years ;” but must to plow again, and count it well if the vintage reach to the seed-time, Lev. xxvi. 5. I mean, if the strength, influence, and comfort of one duty, hold out to another duty ; and that it may be so, and there be no room left for idleness, God hath appointed ejaculatory prayer, to fill up the intervals, betwixt stated and more solemn duties. These are to keep in the fire, which kindled the morning sacrifice, to kindle the evening sacrifice. When can the Christian sit down and say, *Now all my work is ended, I have nothing to do without doors, or within ?*

Lastly, There is a time when the labour of the husbandman is ended ; old age and weakness takes them off from all employment ; they can look only upon their labourers, but cannot do a stroke of work themselves ; they can tell you what they did in their younger years, but now (say they) we must leave it to younger people : we cannot be young always ; but the Christian is never superannuated as to the work of religion ; yea, the longer he lives, the more his Master expects from him. When he is full of days, God expects he should

be full of fruits, Psal. xcii. 14. " They shall bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing."

REFLECTIONS.

1. How hard have I laboured for the meat that perisheth? Prevented the dawning of the day, and laboured as in the very fire, and yet is the Christian's work harder than mine? Surely, then, I never yet understood the work of Christianity. Alas, my sleepy prayers, and formal duties, even all that ever I performed in my life, never cost me that pains, that one hour at plow hath done. I have either wholly neglected, or at best, so lazily performed religious duties, that I may truly say, I offer to God what cost me nothing. Wo is me, poor Wretch! How is the judgment of Korah spiritually executed upon me? The earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up his body; but it hath opened its mouth and swallowed up my heart, my time, and all my affections. How far am I from the kingdom of God!

2. And how little better is my case, who have indeed professed religion, but never made it my business? Will an empty (though splendid) profession save me? How many brave ships have perished in the storms, notwithstanding their fine names, the *Prosperous*, the *Success*, the *Happy Return*? A fine name could not protect them from the rocks, nor will it save me from hell. I have done by religion, as I should have done by the world; prayed, as if I prayed not; and heard, as if I heard not. I have given to God but the shadow of duty, and can never expect from him a real reward.

3. How unlike a Christian dost thou also, O my soul, go about thy work; though upright in the main; yet how little zeal and activity dost thou express in thy duties! Awake love and zeal, seest thou not the toil and pains men take for the world? How do they prevent the dawning of the day; and labour as in the very fire till night; and all this for a trifle! Should not every drop of sweat which I see trickle from their brows fetch, as it were, a drop of blood from my heart, who am thus convinced and reproved of shameful laziness, by their indefatigable diligence? Do they pant after the dust of the earth? Amos ii. 7. And shall not I pant after God? Psal. xlii. 1. Ah, my soul, it was not wont to be so with thee in the days of my first profession. Should I have had no more communion with God in duties then, it would have broken my heart: I should have been weary of my life. Is this a time for one to stand idle, who stands at the door of eternity? What, now slack-handed, when so near to my everlasting rest, Rom. xiii. 11. or hast thou found the work of God so unpleasant to thee? Prov. iii. 17. or the trade of godliness so unprofitable? Psal. xix. 12. Or knowest thou not, that millions,

now in hell, perished for want of serious diligence in religion, Luke xiii. 34. nor doth my diligence for God, answer to that which Christ hath done and suffered, to purchase my happiness: or to the preparations he hath made in heaven for me? Or dost thou forget that thy Master's eye is always upon thee, whilst thou art lazying and loitering? Or would the damned live at this rate as I do, if their day of grace might be recalled? For shame, my soul, for shame! rouse up thyself, and fall to thy work, with a diligence answerable to the weight thereof; for it is no vain work concerning thee, it is thy life.

THE POEM.

Religion	<i>When</i> advanc'd in pow'r,
Will make you	<i>Husband</i> every hour.
'Twill make	<i>Men</i> strive with all their might,
And therein	<i>Find</i> a sweet delight.
If there were	<i>Nought</i> besides that pay
Christ gives	<i>To</i> cheer us in our way;
Should we not	<i>Do</i> the best we can?
For there's	<i>No</i> such reward from man.
Shall others	<i>Work</i> , and not regard
Their strength	<i>To</i> get a small reward?
Whilst we	<i>Turn</i> slugs, and loiter thus?
O that	<i>Their</i> zeal might quicken us!
Why are our	<i>Hands</i> , and feet so slow,
When we	<i>Unto</i> our business go?
How can we	<i>Then</i> Christ's pay expect,
And yet the	<i>Christian's</i> work reject,
If this, then	<i>Also</i> that embrace
Them both;	<i>If</i> not, we both disgrace.
Some if	<i>They</i> could these two divide,
'Twould	<i>Please</i> them well, with Christ to side!
But if they	<i>May</i> not, then it were
As good	<i>Cease</i> pleading, they'll not hear:
Rouse up	<i>From</i> sloth, my soul betake
Thee to thy	<i>Work</i> , no cavils make.
O strive,	<i>And</i> try! Saints say that even,
The pain they	<i>Take</i> , hath much of heaven.
But yet	<i>Their</i> best wine's kept till last,
Their rest, and	<i>Ease</i> comes all so fast.

CHAP. II.

Upon the Thriftiness of the Husbandman.

*The hardest lab'ers are the thriving men,
If you'll have thriving souls, be active then.*

OBSERVATION.

INDUSTRY and diligence is the way to thrive and grow rich in the world. The earth must be manured, or its increase is in vain expected; *Qui fugit molam, fugit farinam*; He that refuses the mill, refuses the meal, (saith the proverb). "The diligent soul shall be made fat." Solomon hath two proverbs concerning thriftiness and increase in the world. In Prov. x. 4. he saith, "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." And in ver. 22. he saith, "The blessing of the Lord maketh rich." These are not *contradictory*, but *confirmatory* each of other; one speaks of the *principal*, the other of the *instrumental* cause. Diligence without God's blessing will not do it; and that blessing cannot be expected without diligence; therefore husbandmen ply their business with unwearied pains, they do even lodge in the midst of their labours as that good husband Boaz did, Ruth ii. 3. They are *parsimonious* of their time, but *prodigal* of their sweet and strength, because they find this to be the thriving way.

APPLICATION.

As nature opens her treasures to none but the diligent, so neither doth grace. He that will be a rich, must be a painful Christian; and whosoever will closely ply the trade of godliness, shall comfortably and quickly find, "That in keeping God's commands there is great reward," Psal. xix. 11. God is a "bountiful rewarder of such as diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6. They must not indeed work for wages, * nor yet will God suffer their work to go unrewarded; yea, it sufficiently rewards itself, 1 Tim. vi. 6. And its reward is twofold; (1.) Present and in part; (2.) Future, and in full. Mark x. 29, 30. Now in this time an hundred-fold, even from suffering, which seems the most unprofitable part of the work, and in the world to come life everlasting. If you ask what present advantage Christians have by their diligence? I answer, as much and more than the husbandman hath from all his toils and labours. Let us compare the particulars, and see what the husbandman gets that the Christian gets not also. Compare your gains, and you will quickly see the odds.

1. You get credit and reputation by your diligence; it is a commendation and honour to you to be active and stirring men: But how much more honour doth God put upon his laborious servants?

* *Non mercenarii sed operarii.*

It is the highest honour of a creature to be active and useful for its God. Saints are called *vessels of honour*, as they are fitted for the master's use, 2 Tim. ii. 21. Wherein consists the honour of angels but in this, that they are ministering spirits, serviceable creatures? And all the apostles glorified in the title of servants. The lowest office in which a man can serve God, even that of Nethinim, or door-keepers, which was the lowest order or rank of officers in the house of God, Ezek. xlv. 10, 11. is yet preferred by David before the service of the greatest prince on earth, Psalm lxxxiv. 10. It is no small honour to be active for God.

2. You have this benefit by your labour, that thereby you avoid loose and evil company, which would draw you into mischief. By diligence for God, the Christian also is secured from temptation; "God is with them while they are with him," 2 Chron. xv. 2. Communion with God in the way of duty is a great preservative against temptations. The *schoolmen* put the question, how the *angels* and glorified saints become impeccant? And resolve it thus: That they are secured from sin by the beatifical vision; and sure I am that the visions of God, not only in glory, but now also in duty, are marvellous defences against sin; and they who are most active for God, have the fullest and clearest visions of God, John xiv. 21.

3. You have this benefit by your labour, that it tends much to the health of our bodies. The Christian hath this benefit by his labour, that it tends to a healthful state of soul; "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright," Prov. x. 29. As those that follow their daily labours in the field, have much more health than citizens that live idly, or scholars that live a sedentary life: So the active Christian enjoys more spiritual health, and is troubled with fewer complaints than others.

4. By diligence in your civil employments, you preserve your estates, and are kept from running behind-hand in the world. Bailiffs trouble not such men's doors; they usually have the forefoot of their neighbours. And by activity and diligence for God, souls are kept from backsliding, and running back in their graces and comforts. Remissness and intermission in our duties are the first steps and degrees by which a soul declines and wastes as to his spiritual estate.

5. Your pains and diligence in the fields, make your bed sweet to you at night, Eccles. v. 12. "Rest is sweet to a labouring man, whether he eat little or much." But the diligent life of a Christian makes the clods of the valley, his grave, sweet unto him, 2 Cor. i. 12. 2 Kings xx. 3. "Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee," &c. Think Christian, how sweet it will be for thee when thou comest to die, to say then as thy Redeemer did, when near his death, John xvii. 4, 5. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father glorify me with thine own self."

6. The expence of your sweat fills your purses, you get estates by your diligence and labour; but what are your gains to the gains of

Christians? They can get in an hour that which they will not part with for all the gold and silver on earth, Prov. iii. 14.

So that compare these labourers, as to all their advantages, and you shall see, that there is no trade like that which the diligent Christian drives.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Blush then, O my soul, at the consideration of thy laziness and sloth, which is attended with so many spiritual wants! And can I wonder at it, when I

Reflections of the slothful soul.

refuse the painful way of duty, in which the precious fruits of godliness are only to be found? If the fruits lie upon the surface of duty, or could be had with wishes, I should not want them; but to dig deep and take pains I cannot. My desires, like those of the slothful man, kill me, because my hands refuse to labour, Prov. xxi. 25. If every duty were to be rewarded presently with gold, would I not have been more assiduous in them, than I have been? And yet I know that a heart full of the grace and comfort of the Holy Ghost, is better than a house full of gold and silver. O what a composition of stupidity and sloth am I! I have been all for the short cut to comfort, when constant experience teacheth, that the further way about, by painful duty, is the nearer way to it. What pains do husbandmen take? What peril do seamen run for a little gain; O sluggish heart! wilt thou do nothing for eternal treasures?

Secondly, If there be such great reward attending diligence in duty, then why art thou so apt, O my soul, to cast off duty, because thou findest not present comfort in it? How quickly am I discouraged, if I presently find not what I expect in duty? Whereas the well is deep, and much pains must be taken to draw up those waters of joy, Isa. xii. 3. There is a golden vein in the mount of duty, but it lies deep; and because I meet not with it as soon as I expect, my lazy heart throws by the shovel, and cries, Dig I cannot.

Thirdly, If this be indeed the rich and thriving trade, why do I puddle about the poor, low things of the world so much, neglecting the rich trade of godliness for it? O how much of my time and strength have these things devoured? Had I employed that time in communion with God, would it not have turned to a better account? Thinkest thou in earnest, O my soul, that God hath endowed thee with such excellent faculties, capable of the most Divine and heavenly employments, or that Jesus Christ hath shed his invaluable, precious blood, or that he hath sent forth the glorious Spirit of holiness, and all this to fit men for no higher, no nobler employments than these.

Is this the end of thy wonderful creation; Doth God whirl about the heavens in endless revolutions, to beget time for this? Or doth he not rather expect that the weightiest work should engross thy

greatest strength, and choicest hours? O that I could once consider, what a good Master Christians serve, who will not only abundantly reward them at night, but brings them their food into the fields to encourage them in their labour! What pity is it, that so good a Master should be so badly served as he hath been by me! Hark how he pleads to gain my heart:

THE POEM,

By way of Dialogue betwixt Christ and the World.

CHRIST.

O Why so free of sweat and time,
For what ere long will not be thine?
Or if it might, thou sell'st to loss,
A precious soul for lasting dross.
Those weary hands, and toiling brains,
Might be employ'd for better gains.
Wouldst thou but work as hard for me,
As for the world which *cozens* thee;
Thy gains should be a thousand fold:
For my revenue's more than gold.

WORLD.

Soul, I have always found thee willing,
Rather by me to earn a shilling,
Than trust uncertain things which lie
Beyond thee in eternity.
Shall things unseen now tempt thee? Tush,
A bird in hand's worth two i' th' bush.
I pay thee wages down in hand,
This thou canst feel, taste, understand,
O let not such a vain pretence
Prevail against thy very sense.

CHRIST.

Thus beasts are led, thus birds are snar'd,
Thus souls for ruin are prepar'd.
What! trust no farther than you see,
You'll trust a thief as far as me.
Deluded wretch! Will nought but sight
And sense convince thee? O how right,
How just is God? whose direful scourge
Such arguments in hell shall urge.

WORLD.

Christ threatens wrath to come, but I
Do threaten thee with poverty.
And why wilt thou thyself, and those
That are so dear, to want expose!

Come see, the saints, for all their brags,
How well they thrive, they're cloth'd in rags.

CHRIST.

If my dear saints in rags do go,
'Tis not religion clothes them so ;
But by such wants the Lord secures
Their souls against the killing snares :
They all are heirs, tho' under age,
Expectants of their heritage :
Kept short for present, yet condemn
A change with those that scoff at them.

WORLD.

It is vain to plead, for I
With present things charm pow'rfully ;
Whate'er thou offer'st, they'll despise,
I hold them pris'ners by their eyes.

CHRIST.

If they will serve no other Lord,
Then let it stand upon record,
Against their souls, that they refus'd
My wages, and my grace abus'd.
Remember this when they shall see
All turn'd to ashes that's in thee.

ANOTHER.

NONE will deny but those are blessed pains
Which are attended with the richest gains.
Grant this, and then most clearly 'tis inferr'd,
Soul-work to all deserves to be preferr'd.
This is an unknown trade : O who can count
To what the gains of godliness amount ?
For one poor shilling, O what risks some run ?
Some toiling as i' th' fire, from sun to sun.
Whereas one hour spent with God brings in
Such heavenly treasures, that poor souls have been
Enrich'd for ever. Even as you see
A prince's favourite, upon the knee,
Can in an hour's time more wealth obtain,
Than all your lives by labour you can gain.
Pray'r-gains are great, and quick returns are made,
Sure then the Christian drives the richest trade.
'Tis true the hypocrite that never drove
A serious trade for heaven may bankrupt prove :
But holy souls, who mind, and closely ply
Their business, greatly are enrich'd thereby :

The difference 'twixt the one, and th' other's best
 By such a simile as this, exprest :
 As in a summer's day you often see
 The wanton butterfly, and painful bee ;
 On fragrant flowers fix, whence one doth strive
 To bear his precious burden to the hive ;
 The other's pains no profit with it brings,
 His time is spent in painting of his wings.
 When winter comes, the bee hath full supplies,
 The other creeps into an hole, and dies.
 Like different events shall be betwixt
 The painful saint, and lazy notionist.

CHAP. III.

Upon the cheerfulness of the Husbandman.

*The plowman sings, and whistles, though he sweat,
 Shall Christians droop, because their work is great ;*

OBSERVATION.

THOUGH the labours of the husbandman are very great and toilsome, yet with what cheerfulness do they go through them? It is very delightful to hear the melody they make, by whistling, as they follow the plow ; yea, the very horses have their bells, which make a pleasant noise. *Horses* (saith Mr. Fuller) *will do more for a whistle than a whip* ; and their bells do, as it were, gingle away their weariness. I have been often delighted with this country music, whereby they sweeten their hard labours with an innocent pleasure, and verify the saying of the poet :

Tempus in agrorum cultu consumere dulce est. Ovid.

Altho' they plow from morning until night,
 Time steals away with pleasure and delight.

APPLICATION.

BUT how much greater cause have the people of God to address themselves unto his work with all cheerfulness of spirit? And, indeed, so far as the heart is spiritual, it delights in its duties. It is true, the work of a Christian is painful, and much more spending than the husbandman's, (as was opened, Chap. 1.) but then it as much exceeds in the delights and pleasures that attend it. What is the Christian's work, but "with joy to draw water out of the wells of "salvation?" Isa. xii. 3. You may see what a pleasant path the paths of duty is, by the cheerfulness of those that have walked in

them, Psal. cix. 14. "I have rejoiced in the way of thy judgments, "as much as in all riches." And by the promises that are made to such, Psal. cxxxviii. 5. "Yea, they sing in the ways of the Lord, "for great is the glory of the Lord." And again, "You shall have "a song as in the night, when an holy solemnity is kept, and glad-
ness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe, to come to the
"mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel," Isa. xxx.
29.

And, lastly, by the many commands, whereby joy in the way of the Lord is made the duty of the saints. "Rejoice in the Lord, ye
"righteous, for praise is comely for the upright," Psal. xcvii. 12.
"Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice," Phil. iv. 4. where the com-
mand is doubled, yea, not only simple rejoicing, but the highest de-
gree of that duty comes within the command. Psal. cxxxii. 9, 16.
"Shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart." And Luke vii. 22,
23. they are bid *to leap for joy*, when about the difficultest part of
their work. And that you may see there is a sufficient ground for
it, and that it is not like the mad mirth of sinners, be pleased to
consider,

1st, The nature of the work about which they are employed : It
is the most excellent and heavenly employment that ever souls were
acquainted with. O what a ravishing and delightful thing it is to
walk with God ! And yet by this, the whole work of a Christian is
expressed, Gen. xvii. 1. Can any life compare with this, for plea-
sure ? Can they be chill that walk in the sun-shine ? Or sad, that
abide in the fountain of all delights ; and walk with him whose name
is the God of all comfort, 2 Cor. i. 3. "In whose presence is the
"fulness of joy," Psal. xvi. 11. O what an angelical life doth a
Christian then live ?

Or, 2dly, If we consider the variety of spiritual employments,
Varietas delectat. Change of employment takes off the tediousness
of labour. Variety of voices pleases the ear, variety of colours de-
lights the eye, the same meat prepared several ways, pleases the pa-
late more, and clogs it less. But oh the variety of choice dishes where-
with God entertains his people in a Sabbath ! as the word, prayer,
sacraments, &c. Isa. lviii. 13. If thou call the Sabbath thydelights ;
or, as Tremellius renders it, thy delicate things. "My soul (saith
David) shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness," Psal. lxxiii. 5.

3dly, or lastly, If we consider the suitableness of this work to a re-
generate soul. Is it any pain for a bird to fly ? Or a fish to swim ?
Is the eye tired with beautiful objects ? Or the ear with melodious
sounds ? As little can a spiritual soul be wearied with spiritual and
heavenly exercises. Rom. vii. 22 "I delight in the law of God after
"the inner man." *Gravia non gravitant in eorum loco*, (saith the
philosopher) weighty things are not heavy in their own element, or
centre. And surely God is the centre of all gracious spirits. A
saint can sit from morning to night to hear discourses of the love and

loveliness of Jesus Christ. The sight of your thriving flocks and flourishing fields, cannot yield you that pleasure which an upright soul can find in one quarter of an hour's communion with God. "They that are after the flesh, (saith the apostle, Rom. viii. 5.) do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." But then look how much heavenly objects transcend earthly ones, and how much the soul is more capable of delight in those objects, than the gross and duller senses are in theirs; so much doth the pleasure arising from duty excel all sensitive delights on earth.

REFLECTIONS.

How am I cast and condemned by this, may I say, who never savoured this spiritual delight in holy duties! *The carnal heart's reflection.* When I am about my earthly employments, I can go on unweariedly from day to day; all the way is down-hill to my nature, and the wheels of my affections being oiled with carnal delight, run so fast, that they have need most times of triggling. Here I rather need the curb than the spur. O how fleet and nimble are my spirits in these their pursuits! but O what a slug am I in religious duties! sure if my heart were renewed by grace, I should delight in the law of God, Rom. vii. 22. All the world is alive in their ways, every creature enjoys his proper pleasure; and is there no delight to be found in the paths of holiness? Is godliness only a dry root that bears no pleasant fruits? No, there are doubtless incomparable pleasures to be found therein; but such a carnal heart as mine savours them not.

I cannot say but I have found delight in religious duties, but they have been only such as rather sprang from the ostentation of gifts and applauses of men than any *The hypocrite's reflection.* sweet and real communion I have had with God through them; they have rather proved food and fuel to my pride, than food to my soul. Like the nightingale, I can sing sweetly, when I observe others to listen to me, and be affected with my music. O false, deceitful heart, such delight as this will end in howling! were my spirit right, it would as much delight in retirements for the enjoyment of God, as it doth in those duties that are most exposed to the observation of man. Will such a spring as this maintain a stream of affections when carnal motives fail? What wilt thou answer, O my soul! to that question? Job xxvii. 9, 10, "Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" What wilt thou reply to this question? Deceive not thou thyself, O my soul! thou wilt doubtless be easily persuaded to let go that thou never delightedst in, and, from an hypocrite in religion, quickly become an apostate from religion.

The upright heart's reflection. From all this the upright heart takes advantage to rouse up its delight in God, and thus it expostulateth with itself : Doth the plowman sing amidst his drudging labours, and whistle away his weariness in the fields ; and shall I droop amidst such heavenly employment ? O my soul, what wantest thou here, to provoke thy delight ? If there be such an affection as delight in thee, methinks such an object as the blessed face of God in ordinances should excite it. Ah ! how would this ennoble all my services, and make them angel-like ! how glad are those blessed creatures to be employed for God ! No sooner were they created, but they sang together, and shouted for joy, Job xxxviii. 7. How did they fill the air with heavenly melody, when sent to bring the joyful tidings of a Saviour to the world ! Ascribing glory to God in the highest, even to the highest of their powers. Yea, this delight would make all my duties Christ-like ; and the nearer that pattern, the more excellent : he delighted to do his Father's will, it was to him meat and drink, Psalm xl. 7. John iv. 32, 34.

Yea, it would not only ennoble, but facilitate all my duties, and be to me as wings to a bird in flying, or sails to a ship in motion. *Non tardat uncta rota* ; oiled wheels run freely : “ Or ever I was aware “ my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” O what is the reason (my God) my delight in thee should be so little ? Is it not because my unbelief is so great ? Rouse up my delights, O thou fountain of pleasure ! and let me swim down the stream of holy joy in duty, into the boundless ocean of those immense delights that are in thy presence, and at thy right hand for evermore.

THE POEM.

O What a dull, desponding heart is mine !
 That takes no more delight in things divine.
 When all the creatures, both in heav'n and earth,
 Enjoy their pleasures, and are big with mirth.
 Angels and saints that are before the throne,
 In ecstasies and raptures every one
 Perpetually is held ; each blessed spirit
 The purest, highest joys doth there inherit :
 The saints on earth, in their imperfect state,
 Those peerless joys, by faith do antedate.
 To nat'ral men, who savour not this pleasure,
 Yet bounteous nature doth unlock her treasure
 Of sensitive delights ; yea, strange to tell,
 Bold sinners rant it all the way to hell.
 Like fish that play in Jordan's silver stream,
 So these in sensual lusts, and never dream
 Of that dread sea to which the stream doth tend,
 And to their pleasures puts a fatal end.

Yea, birds and beasts, as well as men, enjoy
 Their innocent delights : these chirp and play ;
 The cheerful birds among the branches sing,
 And make the neighb'ring groves with music ring :
 With various warbling notes they all invite
 Our ravish'd ears with pleasure and delight.
 The new-fall'n lambs, will in a sun-shine day,
 About their feeding dams jump up and play.
 Are cisterns sweet ? and is the fountain bitter ?
 Or can the sun be dark when glow-worms glitter ?
 Have instruments their sweet, melodious airs ?
 All creatures their delights ; and saints not theirs ?
 Yea, theirs transcend these sensual ones as far
 As noon-day Phœbus doth a twinkling star.
 Why droop I then, may any creature have
 A life like mine for pleasure ? Who e'er gave
 The like encouragement that Christ hath given,
 To do his will on earth, as 'tis in heaven ?

CHAP. IV.

Upon the due Quality of Arable Land.

*Corn land must neither be too fat, nor poor ;
 The middle state suits best with Christians, sure.*

OBSERVATION.

HUSBANDMEN find, by experience, that their arable lands may be dressed too much, as well as too little ; if the soil be over-rank, the seed shoots up so much into the stalk, that it seldom ears well ; and if too thin and poor, it wants its due nutriment, and comes not to perfection. Therefore their care is, to keep it in heart, but not to over-dress, or under-dress it. The end of all their cost and pains about it is fruit ; and therefore reason tells them, that such a state and temperament of it, as best fits it for fruit, is best both for it and them.

APPLICATION.

AND doth not spiritual experience, teach Christians that a mediocrity and competency of the things of this life, best fit them for the fruits of obedience, which is the end and excellency of their being ? A man may be over-mercied, as well as over-afflicted ; *Raro fumant felicitibus aræ*, the altars of the rich seldom smoke. When our outward enjoyments are by providence shaped, and fitted to our con-

dition, as a suit is to the body that sits close and neat, neither too short, nor too long ; we cannot desire a better condition in this world. This was it that wise Agur requested of God, Prov. xxx. 8, 9. “ Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say who is the Lord ? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.” Against both he prays *equally*, not *absolutely* ; that had been his sin ; but, comparatively, and submissively to the will of God. He had rather, if God see it fit to avoid both of these extremes ; but what would he have then ? Why, food convenient. Or according to the Hebrew, give me my prey or statute-bread ; which is a metaphor from birds which fly up and down to prey for their young, and what they get they distribute among them ; they bring them enough to preserve their lives, but not more than enough to lie mouldering in the nest. Such a proportion Agur desired, and the reason why he desired it is drawn from the danger of both extremes. He measured like a wise Christian, the convenience or inconvenience of his estate in the world, by its suitableness or unsuitableness to the end of his being, which is the service of his God. He accounted the true excellence of his life to consist in its reference and tendency to the glory of his God ; and he could not see how a *redundancy*, or too great a *penury* of earthly comforts could fit him for that ; but a middle estate, equally removed from both extremes, best fitted that end. And this was all that good Jacob, who was led by the same Spirit, looked at, Gen. xxviii. 20. “ And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, “ if God will be with me, and keep me in the way that I go, and “ give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again “ to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God.” Poor Jacob, he desires no great matters in the world, food and raiment will satisfy him ; in spiritual matters his desires are boundless, he is the most greedy and unsatisfied man in the world, Hos. xii. 4. but in the matters of this life, if he can get from God but *offam et aquam*, a morsel of meat and a mouthful of water, he will not envy the richest Cræsus, or Crassus upon earth. *Cibus et potus sunt divitiæ Christianorum* ; meat and drink are the riches of Christians. *Divitiæ sunt ad legem naturæ composita paupertas*, saith Pomponius Atticus ; riches are such a poverty, or mediocrity, as hath enough for nature’s uses ; and such a state is best accommodated both to the condition, and to the desires of a saint.

1. To his condition, for what is a saint but a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, a man in a strange country travelling homeward ? So David professed himself, Psalm cxix. 12. “ I am a stranger in this “ earth.” And so those worthies, who are now at home in heaven, Heb. xi. 13. they professed themselves to be strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and to seek a country ; a *viaticum* contents a traveller, he will not incumber himself with superfluous things, which would rather clog and tire, than expedite and help him in his journey.

2. It suits best with his desires, I mean his regular and advised desires. For.

1. A gracious soul earnestly desires a free condition in the world ; he is sensible he hath much work to do, a race to run, and is loth to be clogged, or have his foot in the snare of the cares or pleasures of this life. He knows that fulness exposes to wantonness and irreligion, Deut. vi. 12. Hos. xiii. 6. It is hard, in the midst of so many tempting objects, to keep the golden bridle of moderation upon the affections. The heart of a Christian, like the moon, commonly suffers an eclipse when it is at the full, and that by the interposition of the earth.

It was Solomon's fulness that drew out and dissolved his spirits, and brought him to such a low ebb in spirituals, that it remains a question with some, Whether he ever recovered it to his dying day. As it is the misery of the poor to be neglected of men, so it is the misery of the rich to neglect God. Who can be poorer than to have the world and love it? Or richer, than to enjoy but little of it, and live above it?

And on the other side, extreme poverty is no less exposed to sin and danger, Lev. vi. 2, 3, 4. As high and lofty trees are subject to storms and tempests, so the lower shrubs to be browsed on by every beast ; and therefore a saint desires a just competency as the *fittest*, because the *freest* state.

2. A gracious person desires no more but a competency, because there is most of God's love and care discovered in giving in our daily bread, by a daily providence. It is betwixt such a condition, and a fulness of creature-provisions in our land, as it was betwixt Egypt and Canaan ; Egypt was watered with the flood from the river Nilus, and little of God was seen in that mercy ; but Canaan depended upon the dews and showers of heaven ? and so every shower of rain was a refreshing shower to their souls, as well as bodies. Most men that have a stock of creature-comforts in their hands, look upon all as coming in an ordinary, natural course, and see very little of God in their mercies. Pope Adrian built a college at Louvain, and caused this inscription to be written in letters of gold on the gates thereof ; *Trajectum plantavit, Louvanium rigavit, Cæsar dedit incrementum ;* (i. e.) Utrecht planted me, Louvain watered me, and Cæsar gave the increase. One to reprove his folly wrote underneath, *Hic Deus nihil fecit* ; here God did nothing. Carnal men sow, and reap, and eat, and look no further.

But now, when a man sees his mercies come in by the special and assiduous care of God for him, there is a double sweetness in those mercies ; the natural sweetness which comes from the creature itself, every one, even the beasts, can taste that as well as thee ; but besides that, there is a spiritual sweetness, far exceeding the former, which none but a believer tastes ; and much of that comes from the manner

in which he receives it, because it comes (be it never so coarse or little) as a covenant mercy to him. “He hath given bread to them that fear him, he is ever mindful of his covenant,” Psal. cxi. 5. Luther, who made many a meal upon a broiled herring, was wont to say, *Mendicatio pane hic vivamus, annon hoc pulchre sarcitur in eo, quod pascimur pane cum angelis et vita æterna, Christo et sacramentis*: Let us be content with coarse fare here, have we not the bread that came down from heaven? Do we not feed with angels? A pregnant instance of the sweetness of such mercies is given us by a worthy divine of our own, Mr. Isaac Ambrose, ‘* For my own part (saith he) however the Lord hath seen cause to give me but a poor pittance of outward things, for which I bless his name, yet in the income thereof, I have many times observed so much of his peculiar providence, that thereby they have been very much sweetened, and my heart hath been raised to admire his grace. When of late under an hard dispensation (which I judge not meet to mention, wherein I suffered with inward peace conscientiously) all streams of wonted supplies being stopt, the waters of relief for myself and family did run low. I went to bed with some staggerings and doubtings of the fountain’s letting out itself for our refreshing; but ere I did awake in the morning, a letter was brought to my bed-side, which was signed by a choice friend, Mr. Anthony Ash, which reported some unexpected breakings out of God’s goodness for my comfort. These are some of his lines,——Your God, who hath given you an heart thankfully to record your experiences of his goodness, doth renew experiences for your encouragement. Now I shall report one which will raise your spirit towards the God of your mercy, &c. Whereupon he sweetly concludes, ‘One morsel of God’s provision, (especially if it come unexpected, and upon prayer, when wants are most) will be more sweet to a spiritual relish, than all former full enjoyments were.

Many mercies come unasked for, and they require thankfulness, but when mercies come in upon prayer, and as a return of prayer, their sweetness more than doubles; for now it is both God’s blessing upon his own institution, and a seal set to his promise at once, Psal. lxxvi. 13, 17. Doubtless Hannah found more comfort in her Samuel, and Leah in her Naphtali, the one being asked of God, and the other wrestled for with God, (as their names import) than mothers ordinarily do in their children.

REFLECTIONS.

The reflection of the designing hypocrite. Do the people of God desire only so much of the creature as may fit them for the service of God? What wretch am I that have desired only so much of religion as may fit me to gain the creature! As

* Epistle to the Earl of Bedford; ante ultima.

God's people have subjected all their creature-enjoyments to religion, so appositely, O my soul, thou hast subected religion to thy worldly interest and designs. Instead of eating and drinking to serve God, I have served God that I might eat and drink; yea, I have not only acted below religion, but below reason also; for reason dictates plainly, that the means must never be more excellent than the end. Wretch that I am, to make religion a slave to my lust, a stirrup to advancement, an artifice to carry on my carnal designs; verily I have my reward; and this is all the good I am ever like to get by it.

And no less should the worldling tremble, to consider how he hath cast off the duties of religion, made them stand aside, and give place to the world. Instead of desiring so much only as might make him serviceable to God, he thrusts aside the service of God to get as much of the world as he can, who is so far from making godliness the end of his creature-comforts, that he rather looks upon it as an obstacle and hindrance to them. May not the very heathens make me blush? Could Aristotle deliver this as a true rule to posterity, to make religion our first, and chief care? Could Aristippus say, He would rather neglect his means than his mind! his farm than his soul? Will the very Mahometans, how urgent soever their business be, lay it all aside five times in the day to pray? Yea, it is common to a proverb among the very Papists, that mass and meat hinder no man; and yet I, that profess myself a Christian, thrust out duty for every trifle! O wretched soul! how hath the god of this world blinded mine eyes? Can the world indeed do that for me that Christ can do: Hath it ever proved true to them that trusted it, and doated on it? Hath it not at last turned them off, as men turn off a sumpter-horse at night, that hath been a drudge to carry their gold and silver for them all day, and at last is turned out with an empty belly, and a galled back? O how righteous will that sentence of God be! Go cry to the gods whom thou hast served.

And may not many gracious hearts turn in upon themselves with shame and sorrow, to consider how unsatisfied they have been in that condition, that others have preferred and esteemed as the greatest of all outward mercies? I have indeed been fed with food convenient, but not contented? how hath mine heart been tortured from day to day with anxious thoughts, what I shall eat and drink, and wherewith I and mine shall be clothed? I pretend indeed that I care but for a competency of the world, but sure I am, my cares about it have been incompetent. Come my distrustful, earthly heart, let me propound a few questions to thee about this matter, and answer truly to what I shall demand of thee.

Quest. 1. Hast thou here a continuing city? Art thou at home, or upon thy journey, that thou art so solicitous about the world? Thy profession indeed speaks thee a stranger upon earth, but thy conver-

sation a home-dweller. Erasmus said he desired honours and riches no more than a weary horse doth a heavy cloak-back. Wouldst thou not account him a fool that would victual his ship as much to cross the channel to France, as if she were bound for the East Indies? Alas! it will be but a little while, and then there will be no more need of any of these things. It is sad, that a soul which stands at the door of eternity, should be perplexing itself about food and raiment.

Quest. 2. Which of all the saints hast thou known to be the better for much of the world? It hath been some men's utter ruin. Seldom doth God suffer men to be their own carvers, but they cut their own fingers. 'To give riches and pleasure to an evil man (saith Aristotle) 'is but to give wine to one that hath a fever.' Where there is no *want*, there is usually much *wantonness*. What a sad story is that of Pius Quintus. When I was in a low condition, said he, I had some comfortable hopes of my salvation; but when I came to be a cardinal, I greatly doubted of it: But Since I came to the Popedom, I have no hope at all. Though this poor, undone wretch, spake it out, and others keep it in; yet, doubtless, he hath many thousand fellows in the world that might say as much, would they but speak the truth.

And even God's own people, though the world hath not excluded them out of heaven, yet it hath sorely clogged them in the way thither. Many that have been very humble, holy, and heavenly in a low condition, have suffered a sad ebb in a full condition. What a cold blast have they felt coming from the cares and delights of this life, to chill both their graces, and comforts! It had been well for some of God's people, if they had never known what prosperity meant.

Quest. 3. Is not this a sad symptom of a declining state of soul, to be so hot, eager, and anxious about the superfluous trifles of this life? Thinkest thou, O my soul? that one who walks in the views of that glory above, and maintains a conversation in heaven, can be much taken with these vanities? Do not the visions of God veil the tempting splendour of the creature! It was the opinion of some of the Schoolmen, that the reason why Adam in paradise was not sensible of his nakedness, was because he was wholly taken up in conversing with God. But this is certain, lively and sweet communion with God, blunts and dulls the edge of the affections to earthly things; and canst thou be satisfied, my soul, with such gains as are attended with such spiritual losses?

Quest. 4. To conclude, is it not dishonourable to God, and a justification of the way of the world for me, that profess myself a Christian, to be as eager after riches as other men; "After all these things do the nations seek," Matth. vi. 32. If I had no Father in heaven, nor promise in the world, it were another matter: but since my heavenly Father knows what I have need of, and hath charged me to be careful in nothing, but only to tell him my wants, Phil. iv. 6. how

unbecoming a thing is it in me to live and act as I have done ! Let me henceforth learn to measure and estimate my condition, rather by its usefulness to God, than its content and ease to my flesh.

THE POEM.

IF fruit and service be indeed the end
To which my being and redemption tend,
Reason concludes that state of all the rest,
Which is most serviceable, to be best.
And such a state experience shews to lie
'Twixt fulness and a pinching poverty.
This golden *mean* is worth a golden *mine* ;
He that hath this should be ashamed to whine.
The full-fed Christian, like the ox i' th' stall,
Is no way fit to-work, or plow withal.
And penury, like Pharaoh's leaner kine,
Devours the fattest portions of our time.
That man with whom this earthly pleasure's found,
Or in whose heart those anxious cares abound ;
And yet can walk by scripture-rule, and line,
Will need a better head and heart than mine ;
A single staff the traveller may find,
Of use and service ; but if you should bind
A bundle of them to his back, they'll make
Him slack his pace and cry, my shoulders ach.
I am a traveller, this world's my way,
A single staff may be of use to stay
My feeble body, if it do not crack
By too hard leaning on it ; but my back
Will bear no more : Alas ! I soon shall tire,
And more than one I cannot well desire.
Lord, to prescribe to thee becomes me not,
I rather do submit unto my lot.
But yet let condescending grace admit
Thy servant's suit this once, and this is it :
The staff of bread convenient let me have,
And manage it discreetly ; so, 'twill save
Thy feeble servant from the mire and dirt,
But more or less than this may do me hurt.
Or if thou say, thy servant shall have none,
Then strengthen faith, that I may go alone.

CHAP. V.

Upon the Improvement of bad Ground.

*Spent barren land you can restore, and nourish ;
Decayed Christians God can cause to flourish.*

OBSERVATION.

WHERE land is spent out by tillage for want of manuring, the careful husbandman hath many ways to recover and bring it in heart again. He lets it lie fallow, to give it rest, and time to recover itself: carries out to his sand, lime, and compost, to refresh and quicken it again; and in pasture and meadow ground, will wash it, (if possible) with a current of water, or the float of the ways after a fall of rain, which is to the earth as a spring of new blood to a consumptive body. He cuts down and kills the weeds that suck it out, and causes them to make restitution of what they have purloined from it, by rotting upon the place where they grew. As careful are they to recover it, when it is spent, as an honest physician is of his patient in a languishing condition; for he knows his field will be as grateful to him, and fully requite his care and cost.

APPLICATION.

AS man's, so God's husbandry is sometimes out of case, not by yielding too many crops, but too few. The mystical husbandman hath some fields, (I mean particular societies and persons, who were once fragrant and fruitful like a field) which God had blessed, but are now decayed and grown barren; whose gleanings formerly were more than their vintage now; the things that are in them are ready to die, Rev. iii. 3. It is possible, yea, too common for gracious souls to be reduced to a very low ebb, both of graces and comforts; how low I will not say. Our British divines tell us, that grace indeed cannot be totally intermitted, nor finally lost; but there may be an omission of the act, though not an omission of the habit: The act may be perverted, though the faith cannot be subverted; it may be shaken in, though not shaken out: Its fruits may fall, but its sap lies hid in the root. They demerit the loss of the kingdom, but lose it not effectively; the effect of justification may be suspended, but the state of the justified cannot be dissolved*.

Certain it is, one that, like Paul, hath been wrapped up with joy, even to the third heavens, and cried, "I am more than a conqueror,

* *Gratia nec totaliter intermittitur nec finaliter amittitur. Actus omittitur, habitus non amittitur. Actio pervertitur, fides non subvertitur. Concutitur, non executitur. Defluit fructus, latet succus. Jus ad regnum amittunt demeritorie, non effective. Effectus justificationis suspenditur, at status justificati non dissolvitur.*

“who shall separate me from the love of Christ?” may, at another time lie mourning, as at the gates of death, crying, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” One that hath walked in sweet communion with God, sunning himself in the light of his countenance, may afterwards “walk in darkness, and see no light,” Isa. l. 10. He that hath cast anchor within the veil, and rode securely in the peaceful harbour of assurance, may seem to feel his anchor of hope come home to him, and go a-drift into the stormy ocean again, crying with the church, Lam. iii. 18. “My hope is perished from the Lord.” His calm and clear air may be overcast and clouded, yea, filled with storms and tempests, lightnings and thunders; his graces, like under-ground flowers in the winter, may all disappear, and hide their beautiful heads.

To God he may say, I am cast out of thy sight. I know thou canst do much, but wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?

To the promises he may say, you are sweet things indeed, but what have I to do with you? I could once, indeed, rejoice in you, as my portion; but now I doubt I grasped a shadow, a fancy instead of you.

To saints he may say, turn away from me, labour not to comfort me, O do not spill your precious ointment of consolation upon my head; for what have I to do with comfort? To former *experiences*, he may say in his haste, you are all liars. To the *light of God's countenance* he may say, farewell sweet light, I shall behold thee no more. To Satan he may say, O mine enemy, thou hast at last prevailed against me, thou art stronger than I, and hast overcome. To *duties* and *ordinances*, he may say, Where is the sweetness I once found in you? You were once sweeter to me than the honey-comb; but now as tasteless as the white of an egg. O sad relapse! deplorable change! *quantum mutatus ab illo?*

But will God leave his poor creatures helpless, in such a case as this? Shall their leaf fall, their branches wither, their joy, their life, their hearts depart? Will he see their graces fainting, their hopes grasping, the new creature panting, the things that are in them ready to die, and will he not regard it? Yes; “there is hope of a tree if it be cut down, and the root thereof wax old in the earth, yet by the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant,” Job xiv. 8, 9. This poor declined soul, as sad as it sits at the gates of hell, may rouse up itself at last, and say to Satan, that stands triumphing over him, “Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for though I fall, yet I shall arise; though I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me,” Micah vii. 8. He may raise up himself upon the bed of languishing for all this, and say to God, “Though thou hast chastened me sore, yet hast thou not given me over unto death.” He may turn about to the saints that have mourned for him, and with a lightsome countenance say, “I shall

“not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.” He may say to the *promises*, You are the true and faithful sayings of God. My unbelief did bely you; I said in my haste you were liars, but I eat my words, I am ashamed of my folly. Surely, O soul, there is yet hope in thine end, thou mayest be restored, Psal. xxiii. 3. Thou mayest yet recover thy verdure, and thy dew be as the dew of herbs. For,

1. Is he not thy father, and a father full of compassions, and bowels? And can a father stand by his dying-child, see his fainting fits, hear his melting groans, and pity-begging looks, and not help him, especially having restoratives by him, that can do it? Surely, “As a father pities his own children, so will thy God pity thee,” “Psal. ciii. 12, 13. “He will spare thee as a father spareth his own son that serves him,” Mal. iii. 17. Hark, how his bowels yearn! “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself. Is not Ephraim my dear son? Is he not a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, I will surely have mercy on him,” Jer. xxxi. 20.

2. Doth he not know thy life would be altogether useless to him, if he should not restore thee? What service art thou fit to perform to him, in such a condition? “Thy days will consume like smoke, whilst thy heart is smitten and withered like grass,” Psal. cii. 3, 4. Thy months will be months of vanity, they will fly away, and see no good, Job vii. 3. If he will but quicken thee again, then thou mayest call upon his name, Psal. lxxx. 18. but in a dead and languishing condition thou art no more fit for any work of God, than a sick man is for manual labours; and surely he hath not put those precious and excellent graces of the Spirit within thee for nothing; they were planted there for fruit and service, and therefore, doubtless, he will revive thee again.

3. Yea, doth thou not think he sees thine inability to bear such a condition long? He knows “thy spirit would fail before him, and the soul which he hath made;” Isa. lvii. 16. David told him as much in the like condition, Psal. cxliii. 7, 8. “Hear me speedily, O Lord, for my spirit faileth; hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto those that go down into the pit:” q. d. Lord, make haste, and recover my languishing soul; otherwise, whereas thou hast now a *sick child*, thou wilt shortly have a *dead child*.

And in like manner Job expostulated with him, Job vi. 1, 2, 3, 11, 12. “My grief is heavier than the sand of the sea, my words are swallowed up, for the arrows of the Almighty are within me; and the poison thereof drinks up my spirits: The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. What is my strength that I should hope? Is my strength the strength of stones? or are my bones of brass?” So chap. vii. 12. “Am I a sea, or a whale?” &c. Other troubles a man may, but this he cannot bear, Prov. xviii. 14. and therefore, doubtless, seasonable and gracious revivings will come,

“He will not stir up all his wrath, for he remembers thou art but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again,” Psal. lxxvii. 38, 39. He hath ways enough to do it; if he do but unveil his blessed face, and make it shine again upon thee, thou art saved, Psal. lxxx. 3. The manifestations of his love, will be to thy soul, as showers to the parched grass; thy soul, that now droops, and hangs the wing, shall then revive and leap for joy, Isa. lxi. 1. a new face shall come upon thy graces, they shall bud again, and blossom as a rose. If he do but send a spring of * auxiliary grace into thy soul, to actuate the dull habits of inherent grace, the work is done; then shalt thou return to thy first works, Rev. ii. 4, 5. and sing, as in the days of thy youth.

REFLECTIONS.

O this is my very case, saith many a poor Christian; thus my soul languishes and droops from day to day. It is good news indeed, that God both can and will restore my soul; but sad that I should fall into such a state; how unlike am I to what I once was! Surely, as the old men wept when they saw how short the second *temple* came of the glory of the first; so may I sit down and weep bitterly, to consider how much my first love and first duties excelled the present. For,

1. Is my heart so much in heaven now, as it was wont to be? Say, O my soul! Dost thou not remember, when, like the beloved disciple, thou laidst in Jesus's bosom, how didst thou sweeten communion with him? *A convictive reflection.*

How restless and impatient wast thou in his absense! divine withdrawals were to thee as the hell of hell; what a burden was the world to me in those days! Had it not been for conscience of my duty, I could have been willing to let all lie, that communion with Christ might suffer no interruption. When I awaked in the night, how was the darkness enlightened by the heavenly glimpses of the countenance of my God upon me? How did his company shorten those hours, and beguile the tediousness of the night? O my soul, speak thy experience; Is it now as it was then? No, those days are past and gone, and thou art become much a stranger to that heavenly life. Art thou able with truth to deny this charge? When occasionally I pass by those places, which were once to me as Jacob's Bethel to him; I sigh at the remembrance of former passages betwixt me and heaven there, and say with Job, chap. xxix. “O that it were with me
“as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me, when his
“candle shined upon my head, when by his light I walked through
“darkness, when the Almighty was yet with me, when I put on
“righteousness, and it clothed me, when my glory was fresh in me!

* Grace needs more grace to put it in exercise.

“When I remember these things my soul is poured out within me.”

2. Is thy obedience to the commands of Christ and motions to duty, as free and cheerful as they were wont to be? Call to mind, my soul, the times when thou wast borne down the stream of love to every duty. If the Spirit did but whisper to thee, saying, *Seek my face*, how did my spirit echo to his calls? saying, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek,” Psal. xxvii. 8. If God had any work to be done, how readily did I offer my service? Here am I, Lord, send me. My soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib; love oiled the wheels of my affections, and “his commandments were not grievous,” 1 John v. 3. *Non tardat uncta rota*. There were no such quarrelings with the command, no such excuses and delays as there are now. No, such was my love to Christ, and delight to do his will, that I could no more keep back myself from duty, than a man that is carried away in a crowd.

Or, lastly, tell me, O my soul, dost thou bemoan thyself, or grieve so tenderly for sin, and for grieving the Holy Spirit of God as thou wast wont to do? When formerly I had fallen by the hand of a temptation, how was I wont to lie in tears at the Lord’s feet, bemoaning myself? How did I hasten to my closet, and there cry, like Ezra, chap. ix. 6. “O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to look up unto thee.” How did I sigh and weep before him, and, like Ephraim, smite upon my thigh, saying, “What have I done?” Ah my soul! how didst thou work, strive, and cast about how to recover thyself again? Hast thou forgotten how thou wouldst sometimes look up and sigh bitterly? Ah! what a God have I provoked? what love and goodness have I abused? Sometimes look in, and weep, Ah! what motions did I withstand? what a good Spirit have I grieved? Ah! my soul, thou wouldst have abhorred thyself, thou couldst never have borne it, had thine heart been as stupid, and as relentless then as now; if ever a poor soul had reason to dissolve itself into tears for its sad relapses, I have.

2. But yet mourn not, O my soul, as one without hope. Remember, “There is hope in Israel concerning this thing,” As low as thy condition is, it is not desperate, it is not a disease that scorns a remedy; many a man that hath been stretched out for dead, hath revived again, and lived many a comfortable day in the world; many a tree that hath cast both leaf and fruit, by the skill of a prudent husbandman, hath recovered again, and been made both flourishing and fruitful. Is it not easier, thinkest thou, to recover a languishing man to health, than a dead man to life? And yet this God did for me, Eph. ii. 1. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? “Though my soul draw nigh to the pit, and my life to the destroyers, yet he can send me a messenger, one among a thousand, that shall declare to me my uprightness; then shall he deliver me from going down into the pit, my flesh shall be fresher than a child’s, and I shall re-

“turn to the days of my youth,” Job xxxiii. 22. Though my flourish, and much of my fruit too be gone, and I am a withering tree; yet as long as the root of the matter is in me, there is more hope of such a poor, decayed, withered tree, than of the hypocrite that wants such a root in all his glory and bravery. His sun shall set, and never rise again; but I live in expectation of a sweet morning after this dark night.

Rouse up, therefore, O my soul, set thy soul a work on Christ for quickening grace, for he hath life in himself, and quickens whomsoever he will, John vii. 38. Stir up that little which remains, Rev. iii. 2. hast thou not seen lively flames proceed from glimmering and dying sparks, when carefully collected and blown up? Get amongst the most lively and quickening Christians; “as iron sharp-ens iron, so will these set an edge upon thy dull affections,” Prov. xxvii. 17. Acts xviii. 15. But, above all, cry mightily to the Lord for quickening; he will not despise thy cry. The moans of a distressed child work upon the bowels of a tender father. And be sure to keep within thy view the great things of eternity, which are ready to be revealed; live in the believing and serious contemplations of them, and be dead if thou canst. It is true, thou hast reason enough from thy condition, to be for ever humbled, but no reason at all from thy God to be in the least discouraged.

THE POEM.

THOU art the Husbandman, and I
 A worthless plot of husbandry,
 Whom special love did, ne’ertheless,
 Divide from nature’s wilderness.
 Then did the sun-shine of thy face,
 And sweet illapses of thy grace,
 Like April show’rs, and warming gleams,
 Distil its dews, reflect its beams.
 My dead affections then were green,
 And hopeful buds on them were seen;
 These into duties soon were turn’d,
 In which my heart within me burn’d.
 O halcyon days! thrice happy state!
 Each place was Bethel, heaven’s gate.
 What sweet discourse, what heav’nly talk,
 Whilst with thee I did daily walk!
 Mine eyes o’erflow, my heart doth sink,
 As oft as on those days I think.
 For strangeness now is got between
 My God and me, as may be seen
 By what is now, and what was then:
 ’Tis just as if I were two men.

My fragrant branches blasted be,
 No fruits like those that I can see.
 Some canker-worm lies at my root,
 Which fades my leaves, destroys my fruit.
 My soul is banish'd from thy sight,
 For this it mourneth day and night.
 Yet why dost thou desponding lie?
 With Jonah cast a backward eye.
 Sure in thy God help may be had,
 There's precious balm in Gilead.
 That God that made me spring at first,
 When I was barren and accurst,
 Can much more easily restore
 My soul to what it was before;
 'Twas Heman's, Job's, and David's case,
 Yet all recovered were by grace.
 A word, a smile on my poor soul,
 Will make it perfect, sound, and whole.
 A glance of thine hath soon dissolv'd
 A soul in sin and grief involv'd.
 Lord, if thou canst not work the cure,
 I am contented to endure.

CHAP. VI.

Upon the incurableness of some bad Ground.

*No skill can mend the miry ground ; and sure
 Some souls the gospel leaves as past a cure.*

OBSERVATION.

ALTHOUGH the industry and skill of the husbandman can make some ground that was useless and bad, good for tillage and pasture, and improve that which was barren ; and by his cost and pains make one acre worth ten : yet such is the nature of some rocky or miry ground, where the water stands, and there is no way to cleanse it, that it can never be made fruitful. The husbandman is fain to let it alone, as an incurable piece of waste or worthless ground ; and though the sun and clouds shed their influences on it, as well as upon better land, yet that doth not at all mend it. Nay, the more showers it receives, the worse it proves. For these do no way fecundate or improve it ; nothing thrives there but worthless flags and rushes.

APPLICATION.

MANY also, there are, under the gospel, who are given over by God to judicial blindness, hardness of heart, a reprobate sense, and perpetual barrenness; so that how excellent soever the means are which they enjoy, and how efficacious soever to the conversion, edification, and salvation of others; yet they shall never do their souls good. Ezek. xlvii. 9, 11. "Every thing wheresoever the river comes shall live, but the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof shall never be healed, but be given to salt;" i. e. given to an obstinate and everlasting barrenness. Compare Deut. ix. 23. By these waters, saith the judicious Mr. Strong *, understand the doctrine of the gospel; as Rev. xxi. 2. a river of water of life, clear as crystal: *Hic fluvius est uberrima doctrina Christi*, saith Mr. Brightman. This river is the most fruitful doctrine of Christ: yet these waters do not heal the miry, marshy places; i. e. men that live unfruitfully under ordinances, who are compared to miry, marshy places, in three respects:

(1.) In miry places the water hath not free passage, but stands and settles there. So it is with these barren souls; therefore the apostle prays, that the gospel may run, and be glorified, 2 Thes. iii. 1. The word is said to run, when it meets with no stop, *Cum libere propagatur*, when it is freely propagated, and runs through the whole man; when it meets with no stop, either in the mouth of the speaker, or hearts of the hearers, as it doth in these.

(2.) In a miry place the earth and water are mixed together; this mixture makes mire. So when the truths of God do mix with the corruptions of men, that they either hold some truths, and yet live in their lusts; or else when men do make use of the truths of God to justify and plead for their sins. Or,

(3.) When, as in a miry place, the longer the water stands in it, the worse it grows; so the longer men abide under ordinances, the more filthy and polluted they grow. These are the miry places that cannot be healed, their disease is incurable, desperate.

O this is a sad case! and yet very common; many persons are thus given over as incorrigible, and hopeless; Rev. xxii. 11. "Let him that is filthy be filthy still." Jer. vi. 29. "Reprobate silver shall men call them, for the Lord hath rejected them." Isa. vi. 10, 11. "Go make the heart of this people fat, their ears dull," &c.

Christ executes, by the gospel, that curse upon many souls, which he denounced against the fig-tree, Mat. xxi. 19. "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever; and immediately the fig-tree withered away." To be given up to such a condition, is a fearful judgment indeed, a curse with a witness; the sum of all plagues, miseries, and judgments, a fatal stroke at the root itself. It is a woe to hav

* Spiritual barrenness, p. 8.

a bad heart, (saith one) but it is the depth of woe to have a heart that never shall be made better. To be barren under the gospel, is a sore judgment, but to have that *pertinax sterilitas*, a pertinacious barrenness ; this is to be twice dead, and plucked up by the root, as Jude speaks.

And to shew you the woful and miserable state and plight of such men, let the following particulars be weighed.

(1.) It is a stroke at the soul itself, an inward spiritual judgment ; and by how much the more inward and spiritual any judgment is, by so much the more dreadful and lamentable. As soul-mercies are the best mercies, so soul-judgments are the saddest of all judgments. If it were but a temporal stroke upon the body, the loss of an eye, an ear, a hand, a foot, though in itself it would be a considerable loss, yet it were nothing to this. *Omnia Deus dedit duplicia*, saith Chrysostom, speaking of bodily members ; God hath given men double members, two eyes, if one be lost, the other supplies its want ; two hands, two ears, two feet, that the failing of one may be supplied by the help of the other : *animam vero unam*, but one soul ; if that perish, there is no other to supply its loss. “ The soul, saith a heathen *, is the man ; that which is seen, is not the man.” The apostle calls the body a vile body, Phil. iii. 21. and so it is, compared with the soul ; and Daniel calls it the sheath, which is but a contemptible thing to the sword which is in it. Oh ! it were far better that many bodies perish, than one soul ; that every member were made the seat and subject of the most exquisite torture, than such a judgment should fall upon the soul.

(2.) It is the severest stroke God can inflict upon the soul in this life to give it up to barrenness ; because it cuts off all hopes, frustrates all means, nothing can be a blessing to him. If one comes from the dead, if angels should descend from heaven to preach to him, there is no hope of him. If God shut up a man, who can open ? Job xii. 14. As there was none found in heaven or earth that could open the seals of that book, Rev. v. 5. so is there no opening by the hand of the most able and skilful ministry, those seals of hardness, blindness, and unbelief, thus impressed upon the spirit. Whom justice so locks up, mercy will never let out. This is that which makes up the *Anathema Maranatha*, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. which is the dreadfulest curse in all the book of God, accursed till the Lord come.

(3.) It is the most indiscernable stroke to themselves that can be, and by that so much the more desperate. Hence there is said to be poured out upon them the spirit of slumber, Isa. xxix. 10. “ The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes.” Montanus renders it, The Lord hath mingled upon you the spirit of deep sleep. And so it is an allusion to a soporiferous medicine mingled, and made up of opium, and such-like

* 'Οὐκ ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπος τὸ ὁρώμενον. Plato.

stupefactive ingredients, which casts a man into such a deep sleep, that do what you will to him, he feels, he knows it not. "Make their eyes heavy, and their ears dull; lest they should see, and hear, and be converted," Isa. vi. 9, 10. This is the heart that cannot repent which is spoken of, Rom. ii. 5. For men are not sensible at all of this judgment, they do not in the least suspect it, and that is their misery. Though they be cursed trees, which shall never bear any fruit to life, yet many times they bear abundance of other fair and pleasant fruits to the eye, excellent gifts, and rare endowments: and these deceive and undo them. Mat. vii. 22. "We have prophesied in thy name;" this makes the wound desperate, that there is no finding of it, no probe to search it.

(4.) It is a stroke that cuts off from the soul all the comforts and sweetness of religion. A man may pray, hear, and confer, but all those duties are dry stalks to him, which yield no meat, no solid substantial nutriment; some common touches upon the affections he may sometimes find in duty, the melting voice or rhetoric of the preacher may perhaps strike his natural affections, as another tragical story pathetically delivered may do; but to have any real communion with God in ordinances, any discoveries or views of the beauty of the Lord in them, that he cannot have; for these are the special effects and operations of the Spirit, which are always restrained.

God hath said to such, as he did to them, Gen. vi. 3. "My Spirit shall no longer strive with them;" and then what sweetness is there in ordinances? What is the word, separated from the Spirit, but a dead letter? It is the Spirit that quickens, 2 Cor. iii. 2. Friend, thou must know that the gospel works not like a *natural cause* upon those that hear it; if so, the effect would always follow, unless miraculously stopt and hindered; but it works like a *moral instituted cause*, whose efficacy and success depend upon the arbitrary concurrence of the Spirit with it. "The wind blows where it listeth, so is very one that is born of the Spirit," John iii. 8. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." Ordinances are as the pool of Bethesda, which had his healing virtue only when the *angel* moved the waters; but the Spirit never moves savingly upon the waters of ordinances, for its healing of their souls, how many years soever they lie by them; though others feel a divine power in them, yet they shall not. As the men that travelled with Paul, when Christ appeared to him from heaven, they saw the light, but heard not the voice which he heard to salvation: So it was with these; they see the ministers, hear the words, which are words of salvation to others, but not so to them. Concerning these miserable souls, we may sigh, and say to Christ, as Martha did concerning her brother Lazarus: Lord, if thou hadst been here, in this sermon, or in this prayer, this soul had not remained dead. But here is the woe that lies upon him, God is departed from the means and none can help him.

(5.) It is such a stroke upon the spirit of man, as is a fearful sign of his eternal reprobation. It is true, we cannot positively say of a man in this life, he is a reprobate, one that God will never shew mercy to; but yet there are some probable marks of it upon some men in this world, and they are of a trembling consideration wherever they appear; of which this is one of the saddest, 2 Cor. iv. 3. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to those that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not; lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." So Acts xiii. 48. "As many as were ordained unto eternal life believed. Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep," John x. 26. And again, Matth. xiii. 11. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but to them it is not given." There cannot be a more dreadful character of a person marked out for wrath, than to continue under the ordinances, as the rocks and miry places do under the natural influences of heaven. What blessed opportunities had Judas? He was under Christ's own ministry, he often heard the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; he was day and night in his company, yet never the better; and why? Because he was the *son of perdition*, that is, a man appointed to destruction and wrath.

(6.) And lastly, To add no more. It is such a stroke of God upon the souls of men, as immediately fore-runs hell and damnation, Heb. vi. 8. "But which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burnt." So that look as some saints in this world have had a prelibation or forestate of heaven, which the scripture calls *the earnest of the Spirit*; so this is a precursor of hell, a sign of wrath at the door. We may say of it as it is said of the pale horse in the Revelation, that hell follows it. "If a man abide not in me, (saith Christ, John xv. 6.) he is cast forth as a branch, and withered;" which is the very state of these barren, cursed souls. And what follows? Why, saith he, men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. Lo, this is the vengeance which the gospel executes upon this barren ground.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Well then, blessed be God that made me feel the saving power of the gospel. O, let God be exalted for ever for this mercy! that how defective soever I am in common gifts, though I have a dull understanding, a leaking memory, a stammering tongue; yet I have felt, and do feel the power of the gospel upon my heart. I bless thee (my God) that although I labour under many spiritual infirmities, yet I am not sick of this incurable disease. I have given thee indeed just cause to inflict and execute this dreadful curse upon me also, but thou hast not dealt with me after my deserts,

but according to the riches of thy mercy. Some little fruit I bring forth, and what it is, is by virtue of my union with Jesus Christ, Rom. vii. 4. And this hath more in it as to my comfort, than all the glittering gifts and splendid performances of the most glorious hypocrite can yield to him: if I might have my choice (saith one) I would chuse and prefer the most despicable and sordid work of a rustic Christian before all the victories of Alexander, and triumphs of Cæsar. *Blessed therefore be the Lord, who hath abounded unto me in all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

I cannot remember a sermon as another can, but blessed be God that I am able to favour it, and feel it? that I have an heart to love and a will to obey all that God discovers to be my duty.

2. O, then how little cause have I to make my boast of ordinances, and glory in my external privileges, who never bear *The formal professor's reflection.* spiritual fruit under them? If I well consider my condition, there is matter of *trembling*, and not of *glorying* in these things. It may be while I have been glorying in them, and lifting up my secure heart upon them the Lord hath been secretly blasting my soul under them, and insensibly executing this horrible curse by them. Shall I boast with Capernaum that *I am lifted up to heaven*, since I may with her, at last be cast down to hell? And if so, Lord, what a hell will my hell be? It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for me. It drew tears from the eyes of Christ, when he was looking upon Jerusalem, under the same consideration that I doubt I have cause to look upon my own soul, Luke xix. 41. "He wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." So long have I been a hearer, a professor of the gospel, so many years have I enjoyed its distinguishing ordinances, but have they not been all dry and empty things to me; hath not the spirit of formality acted me in them? Have not self-ends and worldly respects lain at the bottom of my best duties? Have not my discourses, in communion with saints been trade words, speaking what I have learnt, but not felt? Sad is my condition now, but it would be desperate and irrecoverable shouldst thou execute this curse upon me.

3. And what may I think of my condition; Lord, I acknowledge my unprofitableness under the means hath been *The less fruitful Christian's reflection.* shameful; and this hath made my condition doubtful. I have often trembled for fear, lest my root had been blasted by such a curse? but if so, whence is this trembling! Whence these fears and sorrows about it? Doth such fruit grow in that soil which thou hast cursed! I am told but now, that on whom this judgment falls, to them thou givest an heart that cannot repent. Lord, I bless thee for these evidences of freedom from the curse: for the fruits of fear, sorrow, and holy jealousy.

* The laws of men spare for the fruit's sake, and wilt thou not spare me also, my God, if there be found in me a blessing in the bud, Isa. lxx. 8.

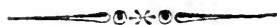
4. To conclude, what a serious reflection should this occasion in every dispenser of the gospel? How should he say when he goes to preach the gospel, I am *The gospel-preacher's reflections.* going to preach that word which is to be a *savour of life or death unto these souls*; upon how many of my poor hearers may the curse of perpetual barrenness be executed this day! O how should such a thought melt his heart into compassion over them, and make him beg hard, and plead earnestly with God for a better issue of the gospel than this upon them.

THE POEM.

YOU that besides your pleasant fruitful fields,
Have useless bogs, and rocky ground that yields
You no advantage, nor doth quit your cost,
But all your pains and charges on them's lost:
Hearken to me, I'll teach you how to get
More profit by them than if they were set
At higher rents than what your tenants pay
For your most fertile lands; and here's the way.
Think when you view them, why the Lord hath chose
These, as the emblem to decipher those
That under gospel-grace grow worse and worse;
For means are fruitless when the Lord doth curse.
Sweet showers descend, the sun his beams reflects
On both alike, but not with like effects.
Observe and see how after the sweet showers
The grass and corn revive: the fragrant flowers
Shoot forth their beauteous heads, the vallies sing,
All fresh and green as in the verdant spring.
But rocks are barren still, and bogs are so;
Where nought but flags, and worthless rushes grow.
Upon these marshy grounds there lies this curse,
The more rain falls, by so much more the worse.
Even so the dews of grace that sweetly fall,
From gospel-clouds, are not alike to all.
The gracious soul doth germinate and bud,
But to the reprobate it doth no good.
He's like the wither'd fig-tree, void of fruit;
A fearful curse hath smote his very root.
The heart's made fat, the eyes with blindness seal'd;
'The piercing'st truths the gospel e'er reveal'd,

* The Roman laws defer punishing a woman with child. *Chryst.*

Shall be to him but as the sun and rain
 Are to obdurate rocks, fruitless and vain.
 Be this your meditation when you walk
 By rocks and fenny-grounds thus learn to talk
 With your own souls; and let it make you fear
 Lest that's your case that is described here.
 This is the best improvement you can make
 Of such bad ground; good soul I pray thee take
 Some pains about them; though they barren be,
 Thou seest how they may yield sweet fruits to thee.



CHAP. VII.

Upon the plowing of Corn-land.

*The plowman guides his plow with care and skill;
 So doth the Spirit in sound conviction still.*

OBSERVATION.

IT requires not only strength, but much skill and judgment, to manage and guide the plow. The Hebrew word *ברש* which we translate to plow, signifies to be intent, as an artificer is about some curious piece of work. The plow must neither go too shallow, nor too deep in the earth; it must not indent the ground, by making crooked furrows, nor leap and make baulks in the good ground; but be guided as to a just depth of earth, so to cast the furrow in a straight line, that the floor or surface of the field may be made plain, as it is Isa. xxxviii. 25. And hence that expression, Luke ix. 62. "He that puts his hand to the plow, and looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of heaven." The meaning is, that as he that plows must have his eyes always forward, to guide and direct his hand in casting the furrows straight and even; (for his hand will be quickly out when his eye is off;) so he that heartily resolves for heaven, must addict himself wholly and intently to the business of religion, and not have his mind entangled with the things of this world, which he hath left behind him; whereby it appears, that the right management of the plow requires as much skill as strength.

APPLICATION.

THIS observation in nature serves excellently to shadow forth this proposition in divinity; that the work of the Spirit in convincing and humbling the heart of a sinner, is a work wherein

much of the wisdom, as well as power of God, is discovered. The work of repentance, and saving contrition is set forth in scripture by this metaphor of plowing*, Jer. iv. 3. Hos. x. 12. "Plow up your fallow ground;" that is, be convinced, humbled, and broken-hearted for sin. And the resemblance betwixt both these works appears in the following particulars.

(1.) It is a hard and difficult work to plow, it is reckoned one of the painfulest manual labours; it is also a very hard thing to convince and humble the heart of a secure, stout, and proud sinner, indurate in wickedness. What Luther saith of a dejected soul, 'That it is as easy to raise the dead, as to comfort such a one.' The same I may say of the secure, confident sinner; it is as easy to rend the rocks, as to work saving contrition upon such a heart. *Citius ex pumice aquam*; all the melting language, and earnest entreaties of the gospel, cannot urge such a heart to shed a tear: Therefore it is called a heart of stone, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. a firm rock, Amos vi. 12. "Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?" Yet when the Lord comes in the power of his Spirit, these rocks do rend, and yield to the power of the word.

(2.) The plow pierces deep into the bosom of the earth, makes, as it were, a deep gash or wound in the heart of it. So doth the Spirit upon the hearts of sinners, he pierces their very souls by conviction. Acts ii. 37. "When they heard this they were pricked, (or * pierced point blank) to the heart." "Then the word divides the soul and spirit," Heb. iv. 12. It comes upon the conscience with such piercing dilemmas, and tilts the sword of conviction so deep into their souls, that there is no stanching the blood, no healing this wound, till Christ himself come, and undertake the cure. *Hæret lateri lethalis arundo*; this barbed arrow cannot be pulled out of their hearts by any, but the hand that shot it in. Discourse with such a soul about his troubles, and he will tell you, that all the sorrows that ever he had in this world, loss of estate, health, children, or whatever else, are but flea-bitings to this; this swallows up all other troubles. See how that Christian Niobe, Luke vii. 38. is dissolved into tears; "Now deep calleth unto deep at the noise of his water-spouts, when the waves and billows of God go over the soul." Spiritual sorrows are deep waters, in which the stoutest and most magnanimous soul would sink and drown, did not Jesus Christ, by a secret and supporting hand, hold it up, and preserve it.

(3.) The plow rends the earth in parts and pieces, which before was united, and makes those parts hang loose, which formerly lay close. Thus doth the Spirit of conviction rend asunder the heart and its most beloved lusts. Joel ii. 13. "Rend your hearts, and not your garments." That is, rather than your garments; for the sense is

* *Glossius Rhet. Sacra*, p. 300.

† *Haerens, punctum cedo, pungendo pectore.*

comparative, though the expression be negative. And this renting implies not only acute pain, flesh cannot be rent asunder without anguish, nor yet only force and violence; the heart is a stubborn and knotty piece, and will not easily yield; but it also implies a disunion of parts united. As when a garment, or the earth, or any contiguous body is rent, those parts are separated which formerly cleaved together. Sin and the soul were glued fast together before, there was no parting of them, they would as soon part with their lives, as with their lusts; but now when the heart is rent from them truly, it is also rent from them everlastingly, Ezek. vii. 15, to 19.

(4.) The plow turns up and discovers such things as lay hid in the bosom of the earth before, and were covered under a fair green surface, from the eyes of men. Thus when the Lord plows up the heart of a sinner by conviction, then the secrets of his heart are made manifest, 2 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. the most secret and shameful sins will then out; for "the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and secret intents of the heart," Heb. iv. 12. It makes the fire burn inwardly, so that the soul hath no rest till confession give a vent to trouble. Fain would the shuffling sinner conceal and hide his shame, but the word follows him through all his sinful shifts, and brings him at last to be his own, both accuser, witness, and judge.

(5.) The work of the plow is but *opus ordinabile*, a preparative work in order to fruit. Should the husbandman plow his ground ever so often, yet if the seed be not cast in, and quickened, in vain is the harvest expected. Thus conviction also is but a preparative to a farther work upon the soul of a sinner; if it stick there, and goes no farther, it proves but an abortive, or untimely birth. Many have gone thus far, and there they have stuck; they have been like a field plowed, but not sowed, which is a matter of trembling consideration; for hereby their sin is greatly aggravated, and their eternal misery so much the more increased. O when a poor damned creature shall with horror reflect upon himself in hell, How near was I once, under such a sermon, to conversion! my sins were set in order before me, my conscience awakened, and terrified me with the guilt of them: many purposes and resolves I had then to turn to God, which had they been perfected by answerable execution, I had never come to this place of torment; but there I stuck, and that was my eternal undoing. Many souls have I known so terrified with the guilt of sin, that they have come roaring under horrors of conscience to the preacher; so that one would think such a breach had been made betwixt them and sin, as could never be reconciled; and yet as angry as they were in that fit with sin, they have hugged and embraced it again.

(6.) It is best plowing when the earth is prepared and mollified by

the showers of rain ; then the work goes on sweetly and easily, and never doth the heart so kindly melt, as when the gospel-clouds dissolve, and the free grace and love of Jesus Christ comes sweetly showering down upon it ; then it relents and mourns ingenuously, Ezek. xvi. 63. “ That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, “ and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when “ I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done.” So it was with that poor penitent, Luke vii. 38. when the Lord Jesus had discovered to her the superabounding riches of his grace, in the pardon of her manifold abominations, her heart melted within her, she washed the feet of Christ with tears. And indeed, there is as much difference betwixt the tears which are forced by the terrors of the law, and those which are extracted by the grace of the gospel, as there is betwixt those of a condemned malefactor, who weeps to consider the misery he is under, and those of a pardoned malefactor, that receives his pardon at the foot of the ladder, and is melted by the mercy and clemency of his gracious prince towards him.

(7.) The plow kills those rank weeds which grow in the field, turns them up by the roots, buries and rots them. So doth saving conviction kill sin at the root, makes the soul sick of it, begets indignation in the heart against it, 2 Cor. vii. 11. The word *Ἀγανακτήσις*, there signifies the rising of the stomach, and being angry even unto sickness ; religious wrath is the fiercest wrath, now the soul cannot endure sin, it trembles at it. “ I find a woman more “ bitter than death,” (saith penitent Solomon) Eccl. vii. 26. Conviction, like a surfeit, makes the soul to lothe what it formerly loved and delighted in.

(8.) That field is not well plowed, where the plow jumps and skips over good ground and makes baulks, it must run up the whole field alike ; and that heart is not savingly convicted, where any lust is spared, and left untouched. Saving conviction extends itself to all sins, not only to sin in general, with this cold confession, *I am a sinner* ; but to the particulars of sin, yea, to the particular circumstances and aggravations of time, place, manner, occasions, thus and thus have I done ; to the sin of nature, as well as practice. “ Behold I “ was shapen in iniquity,” Psal. li. 5. There must be no baulking of any sin ; the sparing of one sin, is a sure argument that thou art not truly humbled for any sin. So far is the convinced soul from a studious concealment of a beloved sin, that it weeps over that more than over any other actual sin.

(9.) New ground is much more easily plowed, than that which by long lying out of tillage is more consolidated, and clung together, by deep-rooted thorns and brambles, which render it difficult to the plowman. This old ground is like an old sinner, that hath lain a long time hardening under the means of grace. O the difficulty of convincing such a person ! sin hath got such rooting in his heart, he is so habituated to the reproofs and calls of the word, that few such

are wrought upon. How many young persons are called to one obdurate, inveterate sinner? I do not say but God may call home such a soul at the eleventh hour, but I may say of these, compared with others, as Solomon speaks, Eccl. vii. 28. "One man among a thousand have I found," &c. Few that have long resisted the gospel, that come afterwards to feel the saving efficacy thereof.

REFLECTIONS.

1. O grace, for ever to be admired! that God should send forth his word and Spirit to plow up my hard and stony heart, yea, mine, when he hath left so many of more tender, ingenious, sweet, and melting tempers without any culture or means of grace. O blessed gospel, heart-dissolving voice! I have felt thine efficacy, I have experienced thy divine and irresistible power; thou art indeed sharper than any two-edged sword, and woundest to the heart; but thy wounds are the wounds of a friend: All the wounds thou hast made in my soul, were so many doors opened to let in Christ; all the blows thou gavest my conscience, were but to beat off my soul from sin, which I embraced, and had retained to my everlasting ruin, hadst thou not separated them and me. O wise and merciful Physician! thou didst indeed bind me with cords of conviction and sorrow, but it was only to cut out that stone in my heart, which had killed me if it had continued there. O how did I struggle and oppose thee, as if thou hadst come with the sword of an enemy, rather than the lance and probe of a skilful and tender-hearted physician? Blessed be the day wherein my sin was discovered and embittered! O happy sorrows, which prepared for such matchless joys! O blessed hand, which turned my salt waters into pleasant wine! and after many pangs and sorrows of soul, didst, at length, bring forth deliverance and peace.

2. But O what a rock of adamant is this heart of mine! that never yet was wounded, and savingly pierced for sin by the terrors of the law, or melting voice of the gospel! long have I sat under the word, but when did I feel a relenting pang? O my soul? my stupified soul! thou hast got an antidote against repentance, but hast thou any against hell? Thou canst keep out the sense of sin now, but art thou able to keep out the terrors of the Lord hereafter? If thou couldst turn a deaf ear to the sentence of Christ in the day of judgment, as easily as thou dost to the entreaties of Christ in the day of grace, it were somewhat; but surely there is no defence against that. Ah! fool that I am, to quench these convictions, unless I knew how to quench those flames they warn me of.

3. And may not I challenge the first place among all the mourners in the world, who have all lost those convictions which at several times came upon me under the word? I have been often awa-

The true convert's reflection.

The stubborn heart's reflection.

The miscarrying soul's reflection.

kened by it, and filled with terrors and tremblings under it; but those troubles have soon worn off again, and my heart (like water removed from the fire) returned to its native coldness. Lord! what a dismal case am I in? many convictions have I choaked and strangled, which, it may be, shall never more be revived, until thou revive them against me in judgment. I have been in pangs, and brought forth nothing but wind; my troubles have wrought no deliverance, neither have my lusts fallen before them? My conscience, indeed, hath been sometimes sick with sin, yea, so sick as to vomit them up by an external, partial reformation? but then, with the dog, have I turned again to my vomit, and now I doubt I am given over to an heart that cannot repent. O that these travelling pangs could be quickened again! but alas! they are ceased, I am like a prisoner escaped, and again recovered, whom the goaler loads with double irons. Surely, O my soul! if thy spiritual troubles return not again, they are but gone back to bring eternal troubles. It is with thee, O my soul! as with a man whose bones have been broken, and not well set; who must, (how terrible soever it appear to him) endure the pain of breaking and setting them again, if ever he be made a sound man. O that I might rather chuse to be the object of thy wounding mercy, than of thy sparing cruelty! if thou plow not up my heart again by compunction, I know it must be rent in pieces at last by desperation.

THE POEM.

THERE's skill in plowing, that the plowman knows,
 For if too shallow, or too deep he goes,
 The seed is either bury'd, or else may
 To rooks and daws become an easy prey.
 This, as a lively emblem, fitly may
 Describe the blessed Spirit's work and way:
 Whose work on souls, with this doth symbolize;
 Betwixt them both, thus the resemblance lies.
 Souls are the soil, conviction is the plow,
 God's workmen draw, the Spirit shews them how.
 He guides the work, and in good ground doth bless
 His workmen's pains, with sweet and fair success.
 The heart prepar'd, he scatters in the seed,
 Which in its season springs, no fowl nor weed
 Shall pick it up, or choak this springing corn,
 'Till it be housed in the heavenly barn.
 When thus the Spirit plows up the fallow ground,
 When with such fruits his servant's work is crown'd;
 Let all the friends of Christ, and souls say now,
 As they pass by the fields, *God speed the plow.*
 Sometimes this plow thin shelfy ground doth turn,
 That little seed which springs, the sun-beams burn.

The rest uncover'd lies, which fowls devour.
 Alas ! their heart was touch'd, but not with pow'r.
 The cares and pleasures of this world have drown'd
 The seed before it peep'd above the ground.
 Some springs indeed, the Scripture saith that some
 Do taste the powers of the world to come.
 These embryos never come to timely birth,
 Because the seed that's sown wants depth of earth.
 Turn up, O God, the bottom of my heart ;
 And to the seed that's sown, do thou impart
 Thy choicest blessing. Though I weep and mourn
 In this wet seed-time, if I may return
 With sheaves of joy ; these fully will reward
 My pains and sorrows, be they ne'er so hard.



CHAP. VIII.

Upon the Seed-Corn.

*The choicest wheat is still reserv'd for seed,
 But gracious principles are choice indeed.*

OBSERVATION.

HUSBANDMEN are very careful and curious about their seed-corn, that it may not only be clean and pure, but the best and most excellent of its kind: Isa. xxviii. 25. "He casteth in the principal wheat." If any be more full and weighty than other, that is reserved for seed. It is usual with husbandmen to pick and lease their seed-corn by hand, that they may separate the cockel and darnel, and all the lighter and hollow grains from it, wherein they manifest their discretion ; for, according to the vigour and goodness of the seed, the fruit and production are like to be.

APPLICATION.

THE choice and principal seed corn; with which the fields are sowed, after they are prepared for it, doth admirably shadow forth those excellent principles of grace infused into the regenerate soul. Their agreement, as they are both seed, is obvious, in the ten following particulars ; and their excellency above other principles in seven more.

1. The earth at first naturally brought forth corn, and every seed yielding fruit, without human industry ; but since the curse came

upon it, it must be plowed and sowed, or no fruit can be expected. So man, at first, had all the principles of holiness in his nature, but now they must be infused by regeneration, or else his nature is as void of holiness as the barren and untilled desert is of corn.

2. The earlier the seed is sown, the better it is rooted, and enabled to endure the asperities of the winter ; so when grace is early infused, when nature is sanctified in the bud, grace is thereby exceedingly advantaged. It was Timothy's singular advantage, that he knew the Scriptures from a child.

3. Frosts and snows conduce very much to the well-rooting of the seed, and make it spread and take root much the better. So do sanctified afflictions, which usually the people of God meet with after their calling, and often in their very seed time. 1 Thes. i. 6. " And " you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the " word in much affliction." But if they have fair weather then, to be sure they shall meet with weather hard enough afterwards. Heb. x. 32. " But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after " ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions."

4. When the seed is cast into the earth, it must be covered up by the harrow, the use whereof in husbandry, is not only to lay a plain floor (as they speak) but to open and let in the corn to the bosom of the earth, and there cover it up for its security from birds that would devour it. Thus doth the most wise God provide for the security of that grace which he at first disseminated in the hearts of his people. He is as well the finisher as the author of their grace, Heb. xii. 2. and of this they may be confident, that he that hath begun a good work in them will perform it unto the day of Christ. The care of God over the graces of his people, is like the covering of the seed for security.

5. Seed-corn is in its own nature of much more value and worth than other corn ; the husbandman casts in the principal wheat. So are the seeds of grace sown in the renewed soul, for it is called *the seed of God*, 1 John iii. 9. *The divine nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4. One dram of grace is far beyond all the glory of this world ; it is more precious than gold which perishes. 1 Pet. i. 7. " The price of it is " above rubies, and all that thou canst desire is not to be compared " with it," Prov. iii. 15.

6. There is a great deal of spirit and vigour in a little seed ; though it be small in bulk, yet it is great in virtue and efficacy. Gracious habits are also vigorous and efficacious things. Such is their efficacy that they overcome the world, 1 John v. 4. " Whatsoever is born " of God overcometh the world." They totally alter and change the person in whom they are. " He that persecuted us in times past, " now preacheth the faith which he once destroyed." They enable the soul to do and suffer great things for God, Heb. xi. 33, 34, 35.

7. The stalk and ear are potentially and virtually in a small grain of corn. So are all the fruits of obedience which believers afterwards

bring forth to God, virtually contained in those habits or seeds of grace. It is strange to consider, that from a *mustard-seed*, (which, as Christ saith, is the least of all seeds) should grow such great branches that the birds of the air may build their nests in them. Surely, the heroical and famous acts and achievements of the most renowned believers sprang from small beginnings at first, to that eminency and glory.

8. The fruitfulness of the seed depends upon the sun and rain, by which they are quickened, as opened largely in the next chapter. And the principles of grace in us have as necessary a dependence upon the assisting and exciting grace without us. For though it be true, they are immortal seed; yet that is not so much from their own strength as from the promises made to them, and that constant influx from above, by which they are revived and preserved from time to time.

9. The seed is fruitful in some soils more than in others, prospers much better, and comes sooner to maturity. So do graces thrive better and grow faster in some persons than in others. "Your faith groweth exceedingly," 2 Thes. i. 3. "Whilst the things that are in others are ready to die," Rev. iii. 2. Though no man's heart be naturally a kind soil to grace, yet doubtless grace is more advantaged in some dispositions than in others.

10. And lastly, their agreement, as seed, appears in this, the seed-corn is scattered into all parts of the field, as proportionally and equally as may be. So is grace diffused into all the faculties: the judgment, will, and all the affections are sowed with these new principles. "The God of peace sanctify you wholly," 1 Thes. v. 23.

And thus you see why principles of grace are called seed. Now, in the next place, (which is the second thing promised, and mainly designed in this chapter) to shew you the choiceness and excellency of these holy principles with which sanctified souls are embellished and adorned; and to convince you that true grace excels all other principles by which other persons are acted, even as the principal wheat doth the chaff, and refuse stuff, I shall here institute a comparison betwixt grace and the most splendid, common gifts in the world; and its transcendent excellency above them all, will evidently appear in the seven following particulars.

1. The most excellent common gifts come out of the common treasury of God's bounty, and that in a natural way. They are but the improvement of a man's natural abilities, (or as one calls them) the sparks of nature blown up by the wind of a more benign and liberal education; but principles of grace are of a divine and heavenly original and extraction, not induced or raised from nature, but supernaturally infused by the Spirit from on high, John iii. 6. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." When a soul is sanctified by them, "he partakes of the", divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. "Is born not of flesh, nor of blood,

“nor of the will of man, but of God,” John i. 13. In this respect they differ from gifts, as the heavenly *manna* which was rained down from heaven differs from common bread, which, by pains and industry, the earth produces in a natural way.

2. The best natural gifts afford not that sweetness and solid comfort to the soul that grace doth; they are but a dry stalk that affords no meat for a soul to feed on. A man may have an understanding full of light, and an heart void of comfort at the same time; but grace is a fountain of purest living streams of peace and comfort, 1 Pet. i. 8. “Believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.” All true pleasures and delights are seminally in grace, Psal. xcvi. 11. They are sown for them in these divine and heavenly graces, which are glory in the bud.

3. Gifts adorn the person, but do not secure the soul from wrath.

Like a precious stone in a toad's head. A man may be admired for them among men, and rejected eternally by God. Who can considerably read that sixth chapter of the Hebrews, and not tremble to think in what a forlorn case a soul may

be, though set off and accomplished with the rarest endowments of this kind! Mat. vii. 22. We read, that many shall say to Christ in “that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and “in thy name cast out devils,” &c. and yet themselves at last cast out as a prey to devils. How divinely and rhetorically did Balaam speak and prophesy, Numb. xxiii. What rare and excellent parts had the Scribes and Pharisees? who upon that account, were stiled *Principes seculi*, the princes of the world. Cor. ii. 8. What profound and excellent parts had the heathen *sages* and *philosophers*? These things are so far from securing the soul from the wrath to come, that they often expose it unto wrath, and are as oil to increase the eternal burnings; but now gracious principles are the *παροχομενα σωτηριας*, as the apostle calls them, Heb. vi. things that accompany and have salvation in them. These are the things on which the promises of salvation run; and these treasures are never found but in elect vessels. Glory is by promise assured and made over to him that possesses them. There is but a little point of time betwixt him and the glorified spirits above. And how inconsiderable a matter is a little time, which contracts and winds up apace? For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. And hence the scripture speaks of them as already saved, Rom. viii. 24: “We are saved by hope,” because it is as sure as if we were in heaven. We are made to sit in heavenly places.

4. Gifts may damnify the person that possesses them, and it may be better in respect of a man's own condition he had never had them. *Knowledge* (saith the apostle) *puffeth up*, 1 Cor. viii. 1. makes the soul proud and flatulent. It is a hard thing to know much, and not to know it too much. The saint's knowledge is better than the scholar's; for he hath his own heart instead of a commentary to help

him. Aristotle said, a little knowledge about heavenly things, though conjectural, is better than much of earthly things, though certain. "The world by wisdom knew not God," (saith the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 12.) i. e. Their learning hanged in their light, they were too wise to submit to the simplicity of the gospel. The excellent parts of the old heretics did but serve to midwife into the world the monstrous birth of soul-damning heresies. *Cupit abs te ornari diabolus*, as Austin said to that ingenious young scholar; the devil desires to be adorned by thee. But now grace itself is not subject to such abuses, it cannot be the proper *univocal cause* of any evil effect; it cannot puff up the heart, but always humbles it, nor serves the devil's designs, but ever opposes them.

5. Gifts may be given a man for the sake of others, and not out of any love to himself; they are but as an excellent dish of meat which a man sends to a nurse, not for her sake so much as for his child's that sucks her. God, indeed, makes use of them to do his children good, the church is benefited by them, though themselves are but like cooks; they prepare excellent dishes, on which the saints feed, and are nourished, though themselves taste them not. They are *dona ministrantia, non sanctificantia*, ministering, but not sanctifying gifts, proceeding not from the good-will of God to him that hath them, but to those he benefits by them. And O what a sad consideration will this be one day to such a person, to think I helped such a soul to heaven, while I myself must lodge in hell?

6. Sin in the reign and power of it, may cohabit with the most excellent natural gifts under the same roof, I mean in the same heart. A man may have the tongue of an angel, and the heart of a devil. The wisdom of the philosophers (saith Lanctantius) *non excindit vitia sed abscondit*, doth not root out, but hide their vices. The learned Pharisees were but painted sepulchres. Gifts are but as a fair glove drawn over a foul hand: But now grace is incompatible with sin in dominion, it purifies the heart, Acts xv. 6. cleanses the conscience, Heb. ix. 14. crucifies the affections and lusts of the flesh, Gal. v. 24. is not content with the concealment, but ruin of corruptions.

7. And lastly, Gifts must leave us at last. "Whether there be knowledge that shall cease. All flesh is grass, and the goodliness of it as the flower of the grass; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever," Isa. xl. 6, 8. Many times they leave a man before death. One knock, if it hit right, (as one saith) may make a wise man a fool: but, to be sure, they all leave us at death. "Doth not his excellency which is in him go away?" Job iv. 21. yea, then all natural excellency departs: Death strips the soul of all those splendid ornaments; then the rhetorical tongue is struck dumb; the nimble wit and curious fancy shall entertain your ears with no more pleasant discourses. *Nunquam jocos dabis*, as Adrian said to his departing soul; but grace ascends with the

soul into eternity, and there receives its perfection, and accomplishment. Gifts take their leave of the soul as Orpah did of Naomi; but grace saith then, as Ruth, *Where thou goest I will go, and, where thou lodgest I will lodge, and nothing shall separate thee and me.* Now put all this together, and then judge whether the apostle spoke hyperboles, when he said, "Covet earnestly the best gifts, "and yet I shew unto you a more excellent way," 1 Cor. xii. ult. And thus you have the choiceness of these principles also.

REFLECTIONS.

The gracious soul's reflection.

The lines are fallen to me in a pleasant place, may the gracious soul say: How defective soever I am in gifts, yet blessed be the Lord who hath sown the true seeds of grace in my heart. What though I am not famed and honoured among men, let it suffice me that I am precious in the eyes of the Lord. Though he hath not abounded to me in gifts of nature, "Yet blessed be the God and "Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, who hath abounded to me in all "spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. i. 3. Is not a true jewel, though spurned in the dirt, more precious than a false one, though set in gold? Why art thou troubled, O my soul, for the want of these things which reprobates may have? and art not rather admiring and blessing God for those things which none but the darlings and favourites of heaven can have? Is not an ounce of pure gold more valuable than many pounds of gilded brass? What though the dews of Helicon descend not upon my head, if in the mean time the sweet influences of Sion fall upon my heart? O my God! how much soever others are elated by the light of their knowledge, I have cause, with humility to adore thee for the heavenly heat with which thou hast warmed my affections.

The deceived soul's reflection. Pause a while, my soul, upon this point: With what seed is my heart sown, and of what kind are those things wherein I excel others? Are

they indeed special seeds of grace, or common gifts and natural excellencies? If the latter, little cause have I to pride myself in them, were they ten thousand times more than they are. If these things be indeed the things that accompany salvation, the seed of God, the true and real work of grace, then, (1.) How comes it to pass that I never found my throes, or travailing pangs in the production of them? It is affirmed and generally acknowledged, that the *new creature* is never brought forth without such pain and compunctions of heart, Acts ii. 37. I have indeed often felt an aching head, whilst I have read and studied to increase my knowledge: But when did I feel an aching heart for sin? O I begin to suspect that it is not right. Yea, (2.) And my suspicion increases while I consider that grace is of an humbling nature, 1 Cor. xv. 10. Lord, how have I been elated by my gifts, and valued myself above what was meet? O

how have I delighted in the noise of the Pharisee's trumpet ! Mat. vi. 2. No music so sweet as that. Say, O my conscience, have I not, delighted more in the theatre than the closet ? In the praise of men than the approbation of God ? O how many evidences dost thou produce against me ! Indeed these are sad symptoms that I have shewed thee, but there is yet another, which renders thy case more suspicious yet, yea, that which thou canst make no rational defence against, even the ineffectualness of all thy gifts and knowledge to mortify any one of all thy lusts. It is beyond all dispute, that gifts may, but grace cannot consist without mortification of sin, Gal. v. 24. Now what lust hath fallen before these excellent parts of mine ? Doth not pride, passion, covetousness, and indeed the whole body of sin, live and thrive in me as much as ewer ? Lord, I yield the cause, I can defend it no longer against my conscience, which casts and condemns me, by full proof, to be but in a wretched, cursed, lamentable state, notwithstanding all my knowledge and flourishing gifts. O shew me a more excellent way. Lord ! that I had the sincerity of the poorest saint, though I should lose the applause of all my parts ; with these I see I may go to hell, but without some better thing no hope of heaven.

THE POEM.

GREAT difference betwixt that seed is found,
 With which you sow your sev'ral plots of ground.
 Seed-wheat doth far excel in dignity
 The cheaper barley, and the coarser rye :
 Tho' in themselves they good and wholesome are,
 Yet these with choicest wheat may not compare.
 Men's hearts, like fields, are sow'd with different grain,
 Some baser, some more noble, some again
 Excelling both the former, more than wheat
 Excels that grain your swine and horses eat.
 For principles of mere morality,
 Like cummin, barley, fitches, pease, or rye,
 In those men's hearts are often to be found,
 Whom yet the scriptures called cursed ground ;
 And nobler principles than these, sometime
 Call'd common grace, and spiritual gifts, which shine
 In some men's heads, where is their habitation ;
 Yet they are no companions of salvation.
 These purchase honour both from great and small :
 But I must tell thee, that if this be all,
 Tho' like an angel in these gifts you shine
 Amongst blind mortals, for a little time ;
 The day's at hand, when, such as thou must take
 Thy lot with devils in th' infernal lake.
 But principles of special, saving grace,

Whose seat is in the heart, not head, or face;
 Like solid wheat sown in a fruitful field,
 Shall spring, and flourish, and at last will yield
 A glorious harvest of eternal rest,
 To him that nourish'd them within his breast.
 O grace ! how orient art thou ! how divine !
 What is the glory of all gifts to thine !
 Disseminate this seed within my heart,
 My God, I pray thee, tho' thou should'st impart
 The less of gifts ; then I may truly say,
 That thou hast shew'd me the more excellent way.



CHAP. IX.

Upon springing-weather after seed-time.

*By heaven's influence corn and plants do spring,
 God's show'rs of grace do make his valleys sing.*

OBSERVATION.

THE earth, after that it is plowed and sowed, must be watered, and warmed with the dews and influences of heaven, or no fruit can be expected. If God do not open to you his good treasure, the heavens to give rain unto the land in its season, and bless all the work of your hands, as it is Deut. xxviii. 12. the earth cannot yield her increase. The order and independence of natural causes in the production of fruit, is excellently described, Hos. i. 21, 22. “ I will “ hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth ; and the earth “ shall hear the corn, and wine, and oil, and they shall hear Jez- “ reel.” Jezreel must have corn, and wine, and oil, or they cannot live ; they cannot have it unless the earth bring it forth ; the earth cannot bring it forth without the heavens ; the heavens cannot yield a drop unless God hear them, that is, unlock and open them. * ‘ Nature, and natural causes, are nothing else but the order in ‘ which God works.’ This some heathens, by the light of nature, acknowledged, and therefore when they went to plow in the morning, they did lay one hand upon the plow (to speak their own part to be painfulness) and held up the other hand to Ceres, the goddess of corn, to shew that their expectation of plenty was from their supposed deity †. I fear many Christians lay both hands to the plow, and seldom lift up heart, or hand to God, when about that work.

* *Natura nihil aliud est quam divinorum operum ordo.* Berentius.

† Weem's *Cercm. Law.*

There was an husbandman (saith * Mr. Smith) that always sowed good seed, but never had good corn; at last a neighbour came to him, and said, I will tell you what probably may be the cause of it; it may be (said he) you do not steep your seed: No, truly said the other, nor did I ever hear that seed must be steeped. Yes, surely, said his neighbour, and I will tell you how; it must be steeped in prayer. When the party heard this, he thanked him for his counsel, reformed his fault, and had as good corn as any man whatsoever. Surely it is not the husbandman's, but God's steeps, that drop fatness. *Alma mater terra*, the earth indeed is a fruitful mother, but the rain which fecundates, and fertilizes it, hath no other Father but God, Job xxxviii. 28.

APPLICATION.

AS impossible it is (in an ordinary way) for souls to be made fruitful in grace and holiness, without the dews and influences of ordinances, and the blessing of God upon them, as for the earth to yield her fruit without the natural influences of heaven: for look, what dews, showers, and clear shinings after rain are to the fields, that the word and ordinances of God are to the souls of men. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass," Deut. xxxii. 2. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud; so shall my word be that goeth forth of my mouth," Isa. lv. 10, 11. And as the doctrine of the gospel is rain, so gospel-ministers are the clouds in which those heavenly vapours are bound up: the resemblance lies in the following particulars.

1. The rain comes from heaven, Acts xiv. 17. "He gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons," &c. The doctrines of the gospel are also of an heavenly extraction and descent; they are heavenly truths which are brought to you in earthen vessels; things that were hid in God, and come from his bosom, Eph. iii. 8, 9. What Nicodemus said of Christ is, in a proportion, true of every faithful dispenser of the gospel, "Thou art a teacher come from God," John iii. 2. You are not to look upon the truths which ministers deliver, as the mere effects and fruits of their inventions and parts; they are but the conduits through which these celestial waters are conveyed to you. It is all heavenly, the officers are from heaven, Eph. iv. 12. their doctrine from heaven, Eph. iii. 8, 9. the efficacy and success of it from heaven, 1 Cor. iii. 3. "What I received of the Lord (saith Paul) that have I delivered unto you," 1 Cor. xi. 23. The same may every gospel-minister say too. That is the first:

And then, (*2dly*,) The rains falls by divine direction and appointment: "He causes it to rain upon one city, and not upon another," Amos iv. 7. You shall often see a cloud dissolve and spread itself upon one place, when there is not a drop within a few miles of it. Thus is the gospel sent to shed its rich influences upon one place, and not upon another; it pours down showers of blessings upon one town or parish, whilst others are dry like the ground which lay near to Gideon's wet fleece. "To you is the word of this salvation sent," Acts xiii. 26. *Sent*; it comes not by *chance*, but by *commission* and appointment, and it is sent to you by special direction. Ministers can no more go whither they please, than the failing clouds can move against the wind. Paul and Timothy, were two fruitful clouds that sent down many sweet refreshing showers upon every place whither they came. The Lord sent them through Phrygia and Galatia, but forbad them to preach the word in Asia, Acts xvi. 6. "And when they essayed to go into Bithynia, the Spirit suffered them not," v. 7. But a man of Macedonia appears to Paul in a vision, and prayed him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us," ver. 9. Thus you see how the *mystical*, as well as the *natural* clouds are moved according to divine counsel; and though ministers are not now disposed to their respective places, in such an extraordinary way, yet there is still a special hand of the Spirit guiding their motions, which is seen partly in qualifying them for such a people, and partly in drawing out their hearts to elect and call them, and inclining their hearts to accept the call.

3. There is a great deal of difference in the showers of rain that fall upon the earth. Sometimes you have an hasty shower, which makes the ways float, and the streets run, but it is gone presently, the earth hath but little benefit by it; and sometimes you have a sweet, gentle soaking rain, that moderately soaks to the root, and refreshes the earth abundantly. This is called the *small rain* and the former, the *great rain of his strength*, Job xxxvii. 6. So it is in these spiritual showers; the effects of some sermons (like a sudden spout of rain) are very transient, that touch the heart a little for the present, by way of conviction or comfort, but it fleets away immediately, Jam. i. 23. At other times the gospel, like a settled, moderate rain, soaks to the root, to the very heart. So did that sweet shower which fell, Acts ii. 37. It searched the root, it went to the heart; the influences of it are sometimes abiding, and do much longer remain in, and refresh the heart, than the rain doth the earth. There be effects left in some hearts, by some sermons and duties, that will never go out of it as long as they live. "I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me," Psal. cxix. 93.

4. The rain is most beneficial to the earth, when there come sweet, warm sun-blasts with it, or after it. This the scripture calls "a clear shining after rain," 2 Sam. xxiii. 4. by which the *seminal*

virtue of the earth is drawn forth, and then the herbs, flowers, and corn sprout abundantly. So it is with gospel-showers, when the Sun of righteousness opens upon poor souls under the word, darting down the beams of grace and love upon them, whilst they are attending on it, (just as you sometimes see a sweet shower fall while the sun shines out). O how comfortable is this ! and effectual to melt the heart ! And as the warm rain is most refreshing, so when the word comes warmly, from the melting affections of the preacher, who imparts not only the gospel, but his own soul with it, 1 Thess ii. 8. this doth abundantly more good than that which drops coldly from the lips of the unaffected speaker.

5. Showers of rain do exceedingly refresh the earth, as a man is refreshed by a draught of water, when his spirits are even spent. O how welcome is a shower to the thirsty ground ! Hence the little hills are said to rejoice on every side, yea, to shout for joy and sing when a shower comes, Psal. lxxv. 12, 13. But never were showers of rain so sweetly refreshing to the thirsty earth, as gospel-showers are to gracious souls, Col. iv. 8. they comfort their very hearts. What joy was there in Samaria, when the gospel came to that place ? Acts viii. 8. It revives the soul, it is *mel in ore, melos in aure, jubilum in corde*, honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, and a very jubilee in the heart.

6. Rain is necessary at seed-time, to make ready the earth to receive the seed, Psal. lxxv. 9, 10. "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it ; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water ; thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it ; thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly, thou settlest the furrows thereof, thou makest it soft with showers, thou blessest the springing thereof." And this the scripture calls the former rain. And as this is necessary about seed-time, so the latter rain is as needful about earing-time, to disclose the ear and to bring it to perfection ; both these are great blessings to the earth, and conduce to a plentiful harvest, Joel ii. 23, 24. "Be glad then ye children of Sion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rair, the former and the latter rain in the first month, and the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil." Thus the gospel hath a double use and benefit also. It is necessary as the former rain at seed-time, it causes the first spring of grace in the heart, Psal. xix. 7. And there could be (in an ordinary way) no spring of grace without it, Prov. xxix. 18. And as this former rain is necessary to cause the first spring of grace, so also it hath the use of the latter rain to ripen those precious fruits of the Spirit in the souls of believers, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the

“ unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Were all the elect converted unto God, yet still there would be a necessity of a gospel-ministry.

7. After a great glut of rain, usually there comes a drought ; it is a common country proverb, *Wet and dry pay one another*. And truly when a people are glutted with a fulness of gospel-mercies it is usual with God to shut up and restrain the gospel-clouds, that, for a time at least, there be no dews upon them, and thereby teach them to prize their despised (because common) mercies at an higher rate. For as a good man once said, mercies are best known by the back, and most prized when most wanted. “ In those days the word of the Lord was precious, there was no open vision,” 1 Sam. iii. 1. It is with spiritual as with temporal food, slighted when plenteous, but if a famine once come, then every bit of bread is precious. Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction, and of her misery, all her pleasant things, that she had in the days of old, Lam. i. 7. It is both a sinful and dangerous thing to wantonize with gospel-mercies, and despise the plainest (if faithful) ministers of the gospel. The time may come when you may be glad of the plainest sermon from the mouth of the meanest ambassador of Christ.

8. To conclude, The prayers of saints are the keys that open and shut the natural clouds, and cause them either to give out or withhold their influences, Jam. v. 17, 18. “ Elias was a man subject to like passions, as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months ; and he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.” God hath subjected the works of his hands to the prayers of his saints, Isa. xlv. 11.

Prayer is also the golden key which opens these mystical gospel-clouds, and dissolves them into sweet, gracious showers. God will have the whole work of the ministry carried on by the prayers of his people ; they first obtain their ministers by prayer, Luke x. 2. “ Pray ye the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into the vineyard.” It is by the help of prayer that they are carried on, and enabled to exercise their ministry : They may tell their people as a great general once told his soldiers, ‘ That he flew upon their wings.’ “ Pray for me, (saith the great apostle) that utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mysteries of the gospel,” Eph. vi. 19. Yea, by the saints prayers it is, that ministers obtain the success and fruits of their labours, 2 Thess. iii. 1. “ Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified even as it is with you.” And thus you have the metaphor opened. Now, O ! that these truths might come down in sweet showers upon the hearts both of *ministers* and people in the following reflections.

REFLECTIONS.

I. Am I then a cloud? And is my doctrine as rain to water the Lord's inheritance? And yet do I think it much to be tossed up and down by the furious winds and storms of persecution? Do not I see the clouds above me in continual motions and agitations? And shall I dream of a fixed, settled state? No; false teachers, who are clouds without rain, are more likely to enjoy that than I. Which of all the prophets have not been tossed and hurried worse than I? Acts vii. 52. He that will not let men alone to be quiet in their lusts, must expect but little quiet from men in this life. But it is enough, Lord, that a rest remaineth for thy servant; let me be so wise to secure a rest to come, and not so vain to expect it on earth.

2. And, O that I might study those instruction clouds, from which as from the bottles of heaven, God pours down refreshing showers to quench and satisfy the thirsty earth! In this may I resemble them, and come amongst the people of the Lord, "in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ," Rom. xv. 29. O let not those thirsty souls that wait for me as for the rain, Job xxix. 23. "return like the troops of Tema, ashamed, with their heads covered," Job vi. 19. O that my lips might refresh many! Let me never be like those empty clouds, which deceive the hopes of thirsty souls; but let my doctrine descend as the rain, and distil as the dew, and let that plot of thine inheritance which thou hast assigned to me, be as a field which the Lord hath blessed.

3. Once more, lift up thine eyes to the clouds, and behold, to how great an height the sun hath mounted them, for by reason of their sublimity it is that they are called the clouds of heaven, Matth. xxiv. 30. Lord, let me be a cloud of heaven too: Let my heart and conversation be both there! Who is more advantaged for an heavenly life than I? heavenly truths are the subjects of my daily study, and shall earthly things be the objects of my daily delights and loves? God forbid that ever my earthly conversation should contradict and shame my heavenly calling and profession. Shine forth thou glorious sun of righteousness, and my heart shall quickly be attracted and mounted above these visible clouds, yea, and above the aspectable heavens.

1. Is the gospel rain, and are its ministers clouds? Woe is me then, that my habitation is upon the mountains of Gilboa, where there are no dews! Ah sad lot, that I should be like Gideon's dry fleece, whilst the ground round about me is wet with the dew of heaven; O thou that commandest the clouds above, and openest the windows of heaven, remember and refresh this parched wilderness,

Three reflections for gospel-ministers.

For those that want a gospel-ministry.

wherein I live with showers of grace, that we may not be as the heath in the desert, which seeth not when good cometh, nor inhabit the parched places of the wilderness.

For those that enjoy a gospel-ministry.

2. O Lord, thou hast caused the heavens above me to be black with clouds, thou openest the celestial casements from above, and daily sendest down showers of gospel-blessings : O that I might be as the parched earth under them ! Not for barrenness, but for thirstiness. Let me say, “ My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the “ courts of the Lord : ” that I might there see the beauty of the Lord. Doth the spungy earth so greedily suck up the showers, and open as many mouths as there are clefts in it, to receive what the clouds dispense ? And shall those precious soul-enriching showers fleet away unprofitably from me ? If so, then,

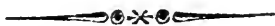
For unprofitable hearers.

5. What an account have I to make for all those gospel-blessings that I have enjoyed ; for all those gospel-dews and showers wherewith I have been watered ! Should I be found fruitless at last, it will fare better with the barren and uncultivated wilderness than with me ; more tolerable for Indians and Barbarians that never heard the gospel, than for me that have been so assiduously and plentifully watered by it. Lord ! what a difference wilt thou put in the great day betwixt simple and pertinacious barrenness ? Surely, if my root be not rottenness, such heavenly waterings and influences as these will make it sprout forth into fruits of obedience.

THE POEM.

THE vegetables here below depend
Upon those treasures which the heavens do spend
Most bounteously upon them, to preserve
Their being and their beauty. This may serve
To shadow forth a heavenly mystery,
Which thus presents itself before your eye.
As when the sun draws near us in the spring,
All creatures do rejoice, birds chirp and sing.
The face of nature smiles ; the fields adorn
Themselves with rich embroideries : The corn
Revives, and shooteth up ; the warm sweet rain
Makes trees and herbs sprout forth, and spring amain.
Walk but the fields in such a fragrant morn,
How do the birds your ears with music charm !
The flowers their flaming beauties do present
Unto your captiv'd eyes ; and for their scent,
The sweet Arabian gums cannot compare,
Which thus perfume circumambient air.
So when the gospel sheds its cheering beams
On gracious souls, like those sweet-warming gleams

Which God ordains in nature, to draw forth
 The virtue seminal that's in the earth ;
 It warms their hearts, their languid graces cheers,
 And on such souls a spring-like face appears.
 The gracious showers these spiritual clouds do yield,
 Enriches them with sweetness, like a field
 Which God hath bless'd. Oh ! 'tis exceeding sweet,
 When gracious hearts and heavenly truths do meet !
 How should the hearts of saints within them spring,
 When they behold the messengers that bring
 These gladsome tidings ? Yea, their very feet
 Are beautiful, because their message's sweet.
 Oh what a mercy does those souls enjoy,
 On whom such gospel-dews fall day by day !
 Thrice happy land ! which in this pleasant spring,
 Can hear these turtles in her hedges sing ?
 O prize such mercies ! If you ask me, why ?
 Read on, you'll see there's reason by and by.



CHAP. X.

Upon a Dearth through want of Rain.

*If God restrains the show'rs, you howl and cry :
 Shall saints not mourn when spiritual clouds are dry ?*

OBSERVATION.

IT is deservedly accounted a sad judgment, when God shuts up the heavens over our heads, and makes the earth as brass under our feet, Deut. xxviii. 23. Then the husbandmen are called to mourning, Joel i. 11. All the fields do languish, and the bellowing cattle are pined with thirst. Such a sad state the prophet rhetorically describes, Jer. xiv. 3, 4, 5, 6. " The nobles have sent their little ones " to the waters ; they came to the pits and found no water ; they " returned with their vessels empty ; they were ashamed and con- " founded, and covered their heads, because the ground is chapt ; " for there was no rain in the earth ; the plowmen were ashamed, " they covered their heads ; yea, the hind also calved in the field, " and forsook it, because there was no grass ; and the wild asses did " stand in the high places : They snuffed up the wind like dragons ; " their eyes failed because there was no grass,"

And that which makes the want of rain so terrible a judgment, is the famine of bread, which necessarily follows these extraordinary droughts, and is one of the sorest temporal judgments which God inflicts upon the world.

APPLICATION.

AND, truly as much cause have they to weep and tremble over whose souls God shuts up the spiritual clouds of the gospel, and thereby sends a spiritual famine upon their souls. Such a judgment the Lord threatens in Amos viii. 11. "Behold the day is come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord." The meaning is, I will send a more fearful judgment than that of the famine of bread; for this particle [not] is not *exclusive* but *excessive*; implying, that a famine of bread is nothing, or but a light judgment compared with the famine of the word. Parallel to which is that text, Isa. v. 6. "I will lay it waste (saith God of the fruitless church;) it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain not upon it." And we find both in human and sacred histories, that when God hath shut up the spiritual clouds, removing or silencing his minister, sensible Christians have ever been deeply affected with it, and reckoned it a most tremendous judgment. Thus the Christians of Antioch, when Chrysostom their minister was banished, * they judged it better to lose the sun out of the firmament, than lose that, their minister. And when Nazianzen was taking his leave of Constantinople, as he was preaching his *farewell sermon*, the people were exceedingly affected with his loss; and among the rest, an old man in the congregation fell into a bitter passion, and cried out, *Aude pater, et tecum trinitatem ipsam ejice*: i. e. Go, Father, if you dare, and take away the whole trinity with you; meaning, that God would not stay when he was gone. How did the Christians of Antioch also weep and lament, when Paul was taking his farewell of them? Acts xx. 37, 38. He had been a cloud of blessings to that place; but now they must expect no more showers from him. Oh! they knew not how to give up such a minister! when the ark of God (which was the symbol of the Divine presence among the Jews) was taken, "All the city cried out," 1 Sam. iv. 13. Oh the loss of a gospel-ministry is an inestimable loss, not to be repaired but by its own return, or by heaven! Mr. Greenham tells us, that in the times of popish persecution, when godly ministers were haled away from their flocks to *martyrdom*, the poor Christians would meet them in the way to the prison, or stake, with their little ones in their arms, and throwing themselves at their feet, would thus bespeak them, 'What shall be our estate, now you are gone to *martyrdom*? Who shall instruct these poor babes? Who shall ease our afflicted consciences? Who shall lead us in the way of life? Recompense unto them, O Lord, as they have deserved, who are the causes of this: Lord, give them sad hearts.' *Quis talia fando, temperet a lachrymis?*

* It is better for us to want the light of the sun, than the teaching of Chrysostom.

And to let you see there is sufficient ground for this sorrow, when God restrains the influences of the gospel, solemnly consider the following particulars.

1. That it is a dreadful token of God's great anger against that people from whom he removes the gospel. The anger of God was fearfully incensed against the church of Ephesus, when he did but threaten to come against her, and remove the candlestick out of its place, Rev. ii. 5. It is a stroke at the soul, a blow at the root; usually the last, and therefore the worst of judgments. There is a pedigree of judgments; first Gomer bears Jezreel; next Lo-ruhamah, and at last brings forth Lo-ammi, Hosea i. 4, 6, 8, 9.

2. There is cause of mourning, if you consider the deplorable estate in which all the unregenerate souls are left, after the gospel is removed from them. What will become of these? Or by whom shall they be gathered? It made the bowels of Christ yern within him, when he lookod upon the scattered multitude that had no shepherd, Matth. ix. 36. What an easy conquest doth the devil now make of them! How fast doth hell fill in such times! Poor souls being driven thither in droves, and none to rescue them! Matthew Paris tells us, that in the year 1073, when preaching was suppressed at Rome, letters were then framed as coming from hell, wherein the devil gave them thanks for the multitude of souls they had sent to him that year. But truly we need not talk of letters from hell, we are told from heaven, how deplorable the condition of such poor souls is; See Prov. xxviii. 19. Hos. iv. 6. Or,

3. The judgment will yet appear very heavy, if you consider the loss which God's own people sustain by the removal of the gospel; for therein they lose, (1.) Their chief glory, Rom. iii. 2. The principal thing in which the peculiar glory of Israel consisted was this, "That unto them were committed the oracles of God." On that account it was called the glorious land, Dan. xi. 16. This made them greater than all the nations round about them, Deut. iv. 7, 8. (2.) By losing the ordinances they lose their quickenings, comforts, and soul-refreshments: for all these are sweet streams from the gospel-fountain, Psalm cxix. 50. Col. iv. 8. No wonder then to hear the people of God complain of dead hearts when the gospel is removed. (3.) In the loss of the gospel they lose their defence and safety. This is their hedge, their wall of protection, Isa. v. 5. Walls and hedges (saith *Musculus in loc.*) are the ordinances of God, which served both *ad separationem et munitionem*, to distinguish and to defend them. When God plucks up this hedge and breaks down this wall, all mischiefs break in upon us presently, 2 Chron. xv. 3, 4, 5, 6. "Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.——And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him

“ that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of “ the countries, and nation was destroyed of nation, and city of “ city ; for God did vex them with all adversity.” How long did Jerusalem remain after that voice was heard in the temple, *Migremushinc*? Let us be gone. (4.) With the gospel, we lose our temporal enjoyments and creature-comforts. These usually come and go with the gospel. When God had once written *Lo-ammi* upon Israel, the next news was this, “ I will recover my wool and my flax,” Hosea ii. 9. (5.) And, lastly, to come up to the very case in hand, they lose with it their spiritual food and soul-subsistence, for the gospel is their *feast of fat things*, Isa. xxv. 6. their spiritual wells, Isa. xii. 3. a dole distributed among the Lord’s poor, Rom. i. 11. In a word, it is as the rain and dews of heaven, as hath been shewed, which being restrained, a spiritual famine necessarily follows, a famine of all the most terrible. Now to shew you the analogy between this and a temporal famine, that therein you may see what cause you have to be deeply affected with it, take it in these six following particulars.

1. A famine caused by the failing of bread, or that which is in the stead, and hath the use of bread. Dainties and superfluous rarities may fail, and yet men may subsist comfortably. As long as people have bread and water, they will not famish ; but take away bread once, and the spirit of man faileth. Upon this account bread is called a staff, Psal. cv. 16. because what a staff is to an aged and feeble man, that bread is to the faint and feeble spirits, which even so lean upon it. And look what bread is to the natural spirits, that, and more than that, the word is to gracious spirits, Job xxiii. 12. “ I have “ esteemed the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food.” If once God break this staff, the inner-man, that hidden man of the heart, will quickly begin to fail and faulter.

2. It is not every degree or scarcity of bread that presently makes a famine, but a general failing of it ; when no bread is to be had, or that which is, yields no nutriment. (For a famine may as well be occasioned by God’s taking away *panis nutrimentum*, the nourishing virtue of bread, that it shall signify no more, as to the end of bread, than a chip, Hag. i. 6. as by taking away *panem nutrientem*, bread itself, Isa. iii. 1.) And so it is in a spiritual famine, which is occasioned, either by God’s removing all the ordinances, and making vision utterly to fail ; or else, though there be preaching, prayer, and other ordinances left, (at least the names and shadows of them) yet the presence of God is not with them. There is no marrow in the bone, no milk in the breast ; and so, as to soul-subsistence, it is all one, as if there were no such things.

3. In a corporeal famine, mean and coarse things become sweet and pleasant. Famine raises the price and esteem of them. That which before you would have thrown to your dogs, now goes down pleasantly with yourselves. To the hungry soul every bitter thing is

sweet, Prov. xxvii. 7. It is the Dutch proverb, and a very true one, *Hunger is the best cook* *.

‘ In time of famine coarsest fare contents,

‘ The barking stomach strains complements.’

It is storied of Artaxerxes Memnon, that when he was flying before his enemies, he fed hungrily upon barley-bread, and said, *Cujusmodi voluptatis hactenus inexpertus fui!* O what pleasure have I hitherto been ignorant of! When great Darius drank the puddled water, that had been defiled with dead carcasses, which had been slain in that famous battle, he professed he never drank more pleasant drink. And famous Humniades said, he never fared more daintily, than when (in a like exigence,) he supped upon bread, onions, and water, with a poor shepherd in his cottage.

Just so doth the famine of the word raise the price and esteem of vulgar and despised truths. Oh! what would you give for one of those sermons, one of those sabbaths we formerly enjoyed! *In those days the word of the Lord was precious.* When God calls to the enemy to take away and remove his contemned, but precious dainties, from his wanton children, and a spiritual famine hath a little pinched them, they will then learn to prize their spiritual food at a higher rate.

4. In time of famine some persons suffer more than others: it falls heaviest, and pincheth hardest upon the poorer sort; as long as any thing is to be had for money, the rich will have it. So it falls out in a spiritual famine; although the most experienced and best furnished Christians will have enough to do to live in the absence of ordinances, yet they are like to subsist much better than weak, ignorant, and unexperienced ones. Some Christians have husbanded their time well, and, like Joseph in the seven years *plenty*, laid up for a *scarcity*. The word of God dwells richly in them. Some such there are, as John calls young men, who are strong, and the word of God remaineth in them; of whom it may be said, as Jerom spake of Nepotianus, that by long and assiduous meditation of the scriptures, he had made his breast the very library of Christ. But others are babes in Christ; and though God will preserve that good work which he hath begun in them, yet these poor babes will soonest find, and be most concerned in the loss of their spiritual fathers and nurses.

5. In time of famine there are pitiful cries, and heart-breaking complaints wherever you go. Oh the many pale faces you shall then see, and the sad language that rings in your ears in every place! One cries, Bread, bread, for Christ's sake! one bit of bread! another faints and falls down at your door. *All her people sigh*, Lam. i. 11. Yea, the poor little ones are brought in, ver. 12. crying to their mothers, Where is the corn and wine? and then pouring out their

* *Jejunus stomachus raro vulgaria temnit.* Horat.

souls into their mother's bosom. Just so it is in a famine of the word ; poor Christians every where sighing and crying, Oh ! where are our godly ministers ? our sweet sabbaths, sermons, sacraments ? My fathers ! my fathers ! the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof ! How beautiful were your feet upon the mountains ? And then, weeping, like the people at Paul's *departure*, to think they shall see their faces no more.

6. Lastly, In time of famine there is nothing so costly or precious, but the people will part with it to purchase bread. " They have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve their souls," Lam. i. 11. And, doubtless, when a spiritual famine shall pinch hard, those that have been close-handed to maintain a gospel-ministry, will account it a choice mercy to enjoy them again at any rate. " Though the Lord feed you with the bread of affliction, and give you the waters of adversity ; yet it will sweeten that bread and water to you, if your teachers be no more removed into corners," Isa. xxx. 20.

REFLECTIONS.

The ungrateful soul's reflection. 2. Is the famine of the word such a fearful judgment ? Then Lord pardon my unthankfulness, for the plentiful and long-continued enjoyment of such a precious and invaluable mercy. How long lightly have I esteemed the great things of the gospel ! O that with eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, I might bless the Lord that ever I was brought forth in an age of so much light, in a valley of visions, in a land flowing with gospel-mercies ! " Hath not God made of one blood all the nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth ? And determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation ?" Acts xvii. 26. Many of these great and populous nations are involved in gross darkness. Now that of all the several ages of the world, and places in it, God should espy the best place for me, and bring me forth in it, in such a happy nick of time, as can hardly be paralleled in history for the plenty of gospel-mercies that this age and nation hath enjoyed ; that my mother did not bring me forth in the deserts of Arabia, or wastes of America, but in England, where God hath made the sun of the gospel to stand still, as the natural sun once did over Gibeon ; and that such a mercy should no more affect my soul, let shame cover my face for this, and trembling seize my heart !

The deprived Christian's reflection. 2. Is the gospel indeed departed ? Its sweet influences restrained ? and a famine, worse than that of bread, come upon us ? *Alas for the day ! for it is a great day, so that none is like it ; it is even the day of Jacob's trouble !* Woe is me, that ever I should survive the gospel, and the precious liberties and mercies of it ! What horrid sins have been harboured amongst us, for which the Lord contends by such an unparalleled judgment ? Lord, let me justify thee, even in

this severe dispensation ; the provocation of thy sons and of thy daughters have been very great, and amongst them none greater than mine. May we not this day read our sin in our punishment ? O what nice and wanton appetites, what curious and itching ears had thy people in the days of plenty ! Methods, tones, and gestures were more regarded than the excellent treasures of divine truths. Ah, my soul ! I remember my fault this day ; little did I then consider, that sermons work not upon hearts, as they are thus elegant, thus admirable, but as they are instruments in the hand of God appointed to such an end. Even as Austin said of the conduits of water, though one be in the shape of an angel, another of a beast, yet the water refreshes as it is water, and not as it comes from such a conduit : by this also O Lord, thou rebukest the supineness and formality of thy people. How drowsy, dull, and careless have they been under the most excellent and quickening means ? Few more than I. Alas ! I have often presented my body before the Lord in ordinances, *η εἰς ψυχῆς ἐξω*, but my soul hath been wandering abroad, as Chrysostom speaks. I should have come from under every sermon, as a sheet comes from the press, with all the stamps and lively impressions of the truths I have heard upon my heart. But alas ! if it had been demanded of me, as once it was of Aristotle, after a long and curious oration, how he liked it ? I might have answered, as he did, truly I did not hear it, for I was all the while minding another matter. Righteous art thou, O Lord, in all that is come upon us !

3. I am now as a spring shut up, that can yield no refreshment to thirsty souls, ready to perish. Thou hast said to me as once to Ezekiel, “ Son of man, behold, I will *The silent minister’s reflection.* “ make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, “ and thou shalt be dumb.” This is a very heavy judgment ; but thou must be justified and cleared in it. Although men may not, yet God, if he please, may put a lighted candle under a bushel. And herein I must acknowledge thy righteousness. Many times have I been sinfully silent, when both thy glory and the interest of souls engaged me to speak. Most justly therefore hast thou made my tongue to cleave to its roof. Little did I consider the preciousness of souls, or the tremendous account to be given for them, at the appearing of the great Shepherd. I have now time enough to sit down and mourn over former miscarriages and lost opportunities. Lord, restore me once again to a serviceable capacity, to a larger sphere of activity for thee, for I am now become as a broken vessel. It grieves me to the heart to see thy flock scattered ; to hear the people cry to me, as once to Joseph, “ Give us bread ; for why should we die in “ thy presence ? ” The word is like fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing. Oh ! that thou wouldst once again open the doors of thine house, that there may be bread enough in thine house for all thy children.

THE POEM.

WHEN God doth make the heavens above as brass,
 The earth's like iron ; flowers, herbs and grass
 Have lost their fragrant green, are turned yellow ;
 The brooks are dry, the pining cattle bellow ;
 The fat and flow'ry meadows scorch'd and burn'd ;
 The country's mirth is into mourning turn'd ;
 The clefted earth her thirsty mouth sets ope
 Unto the empty clouds, as 'twere in hope
 Of some refreshing drops, that might allay
 Her fiery thirst : but they soon pass away ;
 The pensive husbandman with his own eyes
 Bedews his land, because he sees the skies
 Refuse to do it. Just so stands the case,
 When God from souls removes the means of grace.
 God's ministers are clouds, their doctrine rain,
 Which when the Lord in judgment shall restrain,
 The people's souls in short time will be found
 In such a case as this dry parched ground.
 When this sad judgment falls on any nation,
 Let saints therein take up this lamentation.

O dreadful, dark, and dismal day !

How is our glory fled away ?

Our sun gone down, our stars o'ercast ?

God's heritage is now laid waste.

Our pining souls no bread can get ;
 With wantons God has justly met.
 When we were fed unto the full,
 This man was tedious, that was dull :
 But they are gone, and there remain
 No such occasions to complain.
 Stars are not now for lights, but signs,
 God knows of what heart-breaking times.
 Sure heaven intends not peace, but wars,
 In calling home ambassadors.
 How long did Sodom's judgment stay,
 When righteous Lot was snatch'd away ?
 How long remain'd that stately hall,
 When Samson made the pillars fall ?
 When horsemen and commanders fly,
 Woe to the helpless infantry.
 This is a sad and fatal blow,
 A public loss and overthrow.
 You that so long have wish'd them gone.
 Be quiet now, the thing is done :
 Did they torment you e're your day ?

God hath remov'd them out o' th' way.
 Now sleep in sin, and take your ease;
 Their doctrine shall no more displease.
 But, Lord! what shall become of us?
 Our teacher's gone, and left us thus:
 To whom shall we ourselves address,
 When conscience labours in distress?
 Oh! who shall help us out at need?
 Or pour in balm when wounds do bleed?
 Help, Lord! for unto thee our eyes
 Do pour our tears; our groans, our cries
 Shall never cease, 'till thou restore
 The mercies which we had before;
 'Till Sion's paths, where grass now grows,
 Be trodden by the feet of those
 That love thy name, and long t' enjoy
 The mercies they have sinn'd away,



CHAP. XI.

Upon the Corruption of the Seed before it springs.

*Seeds die and rot, and then must fresh appear;
 Saints' bodies rise more orient than they were.*

OBSERVATION.

AFTER the seed is committed to the earth, it seems to perish and die, as our Saviour speaks, John xii. 24. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it brings forth much fruit." The death of the corn in the earth is not a total death, but only the corruption or alteration of it: for if once the seminal life and virtue of it were quite extinguished, it could neither put forth blade or ear without a miracle. Yet because that alteration is a kind of death, therefore Christ here uses it as a fit illustration of the resurrection. And indeed there is nothing in nature more apt to illustrate that great mystery. What a fragrant, green and beautiful blade do we see spring up from a corrupted seed? How black and mouldy is that! How beautiful and verdant is this?

APPLICATION.

EVEN thus shall the bodies of the saints arise in beauty and glory at the resurrection: "They are sown in dishonour; they are raised in glory; they are sown natural bodies; they are raised spiritual bodies," 1 Cor. xv. 43, 44. The husbandman knows,

that though the seed rot in the earth, yet it will rise again. And the believer knows, "that though after his skin worms destroy his body, yet in his flesh he shall see God," Job xix. 25, &c. And the resemblance betwixt the seed sown, and springing up; and the bodies of the saints dying and rising again, lies in these following particulars.

1. The seed is committed to the earth from whence it came; so is the body of a saint; earth it was, and to earth it is again resolved. Grace exempts not the body of the best man from seeing corruption, Rom. viii. 10. Though Christ be in him, yet the body is dead; that is, sentenced to death because of sin, Heb. ix. 27. "But it is appointed for all men once to die."

2. The seed is cast into the earth in hope, 1 Cor. ix. 10. Were there not a resurrection of it expected, the husbandman would never be willing to cast away his corn. The bodies of saints are also committed to the grave in hope, 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those which are asleep, as they which have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, so even also them which sleep in Jesus, shall the Lord bring with him." This blessed hope of a resurrection sweetens not only the troubles of life, but the pangs of death.

3. The seed is cast into the earth seasonably, in its proper season: so are the bodies of the saints, Job v. 26. "Thou shall come to thy grave in a full age, as a shock of corn cometh in, in its season." They always die in the fittest time, though sometimes they seem to die immaturely: the time of their death was from all eternity prefixed by God, beyond which they cannot go, and short of which they cannot come.

4. The seed lies many days and nights under the clods, before it rise and appear again: "even so man lieth down, and riseth not again until the heavens be no more," Job xiv. 12. The days of darkness in the grave are many.

5. When the time is come for its shooting up, the earth that covered it can hide it no longer; it cannot keep it down a day more; it will find or make way through the clods. So in that day when the great trump shall sound, bone shall come to its bone, and the grave shall not be able to hold them a minute longer. Both sea and earth must render the dead that are in them, Rev. xx. 13.

6. When the seed appears above-ground, it appears much more fresh and orient, than when it was cast into the earth: God clothes it with such beauty, that it is not like to what it was before. Thus rise the bodies of the saints, marvellously improved, beautified, and perfected with spiritual qualities and rich endowments; in respect whereof they are called spiritual bodies, 1 Cor. xv. 43. not properly but analogically spiritual; for look, as spirits subsist with-

out food, raiment, sleep, know no lassitude, weariness or pain; so our bodies, after the resurrection, shall be above these necessities and distempers; for we shall be as the angels of God, Matth. xxii. 30. Yea, our vile bodies shall be changed, and made like unto Christ's glorious body; which is the highest pitch and ascent of glory and honour that an human body is capable of, Phil. iii. 21. Indeed, the glory of the soul shall be the greatest glory; that is the orient invaluable gem: But God will bestow a distinct glory upon the body, and richly enamel the very case in which that precious jewel shall be kept. In that glorious morning of the resurrection, the saints shall put on their new fresh suits of flesh, richly laid and trimmed with glory. Those bodies, which in the grave were but dust and rottenness, when it delivers them back again, shall be shining and excellent pieces, absolutely and everlastingly freed. (1.) From all natural infirmities and distempers: Death is their good physician, which at once freed them of all diseases. It is a great affliction now to many of the Lord's people, to be clogged with so many bodily infirmities, which render them very unserviceable to God. *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* A crazy body retorts and shoots back its distempers upon the soul, with which it is so closely conjoined: But though now the soul (as Theophrastus speaks) pays a dear rent for the tabernacle in which it dwells; yet, when death dissolves that tabernacle, all the diseases and pains, under which it groaned, shall be buried in the rubbish of its mortality; and when they come to be re-united again, God will bestow rich gifts and dowries, even upon the body, in the day of its re-espousals to the soul. (2.) It shall be freed from all deformities; there are no breaches, flaws, monstrosities in glorified bodies; but of them it may much rather be said what was once said of Absalom, 2 Sam. xiv. 25. "That from the crown of the head to the sole of his foot, there was no blemish in him." (3.) It shall be freed from all natural necessities, to which it is now subjected in this its animal state. How is the soul now disquieted and tortured with cares and troubles to provide for a perishing body? Many unbelieving and unbecoming fears it is now vexed with: What shall it eat? And what shall it drink? And wherewithal shall it be clothed? "But meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; God shall destroy both it and them," 1 Cor. vi. 13. i. e. as to their present use and office; for as to its existence, so the belly shall not be destroyed. But even as the masts, poop and stern of a ship abide in the harbour after the voyage is ended, so shall these bodily members, as Tertullian excellently illustrates it. (4.) They shall be freed from death, to which thenceforth they can be subject no more; that formidable adversary of nature shall assault it no more. "For they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they shall be equal to the an-

“gels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection,” Luke xx. 35, 36. Mark it (equal to the angels) not that they shall be separate and single spirits, without bodies as the angels are: but equal to them in the way and manner of their living and acting.* We shall then live upon God, and act freely, purely, and delightfully for God; for all kind of living upon, and delighting in creatures, seems in that text (by a synecdoche of the part which is ordinarily in scripture put for all creature-delights, dependencies, and necessities) to be excluded. Nothing but God shall enamour and fill the soul; and the body shall be perfectly subdued to the spirit. Lord, what hast thou prepared for them that love thee!

REFLECTIONS.

The healthful saint's reflection. 1. If I shall receive my body again so dignified and improved in the world to come, then Lord let me never be unwilling to use my body now for the interest of thy glory, or my own salvation! Now, O my God, it grieves me to think how many precious opportunities of serving and honouring thee I have lost, under pretence of endangering my health!

I have been more solicitous to live long and healthfully, than to live usefully and fruitfully; and, like enough, my life had been more serviceable to thee, if it had not been so fondly overvalued by me.

Foolish soul! hath God given thee a body for a living tool or instrument? And art thou afraid to use it? Wherein is the mercy of having a body, if not in spending and wearing it out in the service of God? To have an active vigorous body, and not to employ and exercise it for God, for fear of endangering its health, is, as if one should give thee a handsome and sprightly horse, upon condition thou shouldst not ride or work him. O! if some of the saints had enjoyed the blessings of such an healthy active body as mine, what excellent services would they have performed to God in it?

The sickly saint's reflection. 2. If my body shall as surely rise again in glory, vigour, and excellent endowments, as the seed which I sow doth; why should not this comfort me over all the pains, weaknesses, and dulness, with which my soul is now clogged? Thou knowest, my God, what a grief it hath been to my soul, to be fettered and entangled with the distempers and manifold indispositions of this vile body: It hath made me sigh, and say with holy Anselme, when he saw the mounting bird weighed down by the stone hanging at her leg, Lord, thus it fares with the soul of thy servant! Fain would I serve, glorify, and enjoy thee, but a distempered body will not let me. However, it is reviving to think, that though I am now forced to crawl like a

* Ισαγγελοι ως υιοι θεου.

worm, in the discharge of my duties, I shall shortly fly, like a seraphim in the execution of thy will. Cheer up, drooping soul; the time is at hand when thou shalt be made more willing than thou art, and thy flesh not so weak as now it is.

3. And is it so indeed? Then let the dying saint, *The dying saint's reflection.* like Jacob, rouse up himself upon his bed, and encourage himself against the fears of death by this refreshing consideration. Let him say with holy dying Musculus, why tremblest thou, O my soul, to go forth of this tabernacle to the land of rest? Hath thy body been such a pleasant habitation to thee, that thou shouldest be so loth to part with it, though but for a time, and with assurance of receiving it again with such a glorious improvement? I know, O my soul, that thou hast a natural inclination to this body, resulting from the dear and strict union which God himself hath made betwixt thee and it; yea, even the holiest of men do sometimes sensibly feel the like in themselves; but beware thou love it not immoderately or inordinately; it is but a creature, how dear soever it be to thee; yea, a fading creature, and that which now stands in thy way to the full enjoyment of God. But say, my soul, why are the thoughts of parting with it so burdensome to thee? Why so loth to take death by its cold hand? Is this body thy old and dear friend? True, but yet thou partest not with it upon such sad terms as should deserve a tear at parting. For mayest thou not say of this departure, as Paul at the departure of Onesimus? Philem. ver. 15. "It therefore departeth for a season, that thou mayest receive it for ever." The day of re-espousals will quickly come; and in the mean time, as thy body shall not be sensible of the tedious length of interposing time, so neither shalt thou be solicitous about thine absent friend; for the fruition of God in thine unbodied state, shall fill thee with infinite satisfaction and rest.

Or is it not so much simply for parting with it, as for the manner of thy parting, either by the slow and lingering approaches of a natural, or the quick and terrible approaches of a violent death: Why, trouble not thyself about that; for if God lead thee through the long dark lane of a tedious sickness, yet at the end of it is thy Father's house. And for a violent death, it is not so material whether friends or enemies stand weeping or triumphing over thy dead body. *Nihil corpus sensit in nervo cum anima sit in celo.* When thy soul shall be in heaven, it will not be sensible how the body is used on earth.

4. But oh! what an uncomfortable parting will mine be! and how much more sad our meeting *The ungodly soul's reflection.* again! how will this soul and body blush, yea, tremble when they meet, who have been co-partners in so much guilt? I damned my soul to please my flesh, and now have ruined both thereby: Had I denied my flesh to serve Christ, worn out my body in the service of my soul, I had thereby happily provi-

ded for them both ; but I began at the wrong end, and so have ruined both eternally.

THE POEM.

BARE seeds have no great beauty, but, inhum'd,
That which they had is lost, and quite consum'd ;
They soon corrupt and grow more base, by odds,
When dead and bury'd underneath the clods :
It falls in baseness, but at length doth rise
In glory which delights beholders' eyes.
How great a difference have a few days made,
Betwixt it in the bushel and the blade !
This lovely, lively emblem aptly may
Type out the glorious resurrection-day ;
Wherein the saints that in the dust do lie,
Shall rise in glory, vigour, dignity ;
With singing, in that morning they arise,
And dazzle glory, such as mortal eyes
Ne'er view'd on earth. The sparkling beauties here,
No more can equalize their splendor there,
Than glimmering glow-worms do the fairest star
That shines in heaven, or the stones that are
In ev'ry street, may competition hold
With glittering diamonds in rings of gold.
For unto Christ's most glorious body they
Shall be conform'd in glory at that day ;
Whose lustre would, should it on mortals fall,
Transport a Stephen, and confound a Paul.
'Tis now a coarse and crazy house of clay ;
But, oh ! how dear do souls for lodgings pay !
Few more than I : For thou, my soul, hast been
Within these tents of Kedar coop'd in ;
Where, with distempers clogg'd, thou mak'st thy moans,
And, for deliverance, with tears and groans
Hast often su'd : Cheer up, the time will be
When thou from all these troubles shall be free :
No jarring humours, cloudy vapours, rheums,
Pains, aches, or whatever else consumes
My day in grief ; whilst in the Christian race,
Flesh lags behind, and can't keep equal pace
With the more willing spirit : None of these
Shall thenceforth clog thee, or disturb thine ease,

CHAP. XII.

Upon the Resemblance of Wheat and Tares.

*As wheat resembled is by viler tares ;
So vile hypocrisy like grace appears.*

OBSERVATION.

IT is Jerom's observation, that wheat and tares are so much alike in their first springing up, that it is exceedingly difficult to distinguish the one from the other : These are his words, *Inter triticum et lolium quandiu herba est, et nondum culmus venit ad spicam ; grandis similitudo est ; et indiscernendo aut nulla, aut per difficilis distantia.* The difference (saith he) between them, is either none at all, or wonderfully difficult to discern, which those words of Christ, Mat. xiii. 30. plainly confirm. Let them both alone till the harvest ; thereby intimating both the difficulty of distinguishing the tares and wheat ; as also the unwarrantable rashness of bold and hasty censures of men's sincerity or hypocrisy, which is there shadowed by them.

APPLICATION.

HOW difficult soever it be to discern the difference betwixt wheat and tares, yet, doubtless, the eye of sense can much easier discriminate them, than the most quick and piercing eye of man can discern the difference betwixt special and common grace ; for all saving graces in the saints have their counterfeits in hypocrites. There are *similar works* in these, which a spiritual and very judicious eye may easily mistake for the *saving and genuine effects* of the sanctifying Spirit.

Doth the Spirit of God convince the consciences of his people of the evil of sin ? Rom. vii. 9. Hypocrites have their convictions too, Exod. x. 16. " Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste ; " and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you." Thus was Saul also convicted, 1 Sam. xv. 24.

Doth true conviction and compunction work reformation of life in the people of God ? Even hypocrites also have been famous for their reformations. The unclean spirit often goes out of the formal hypocrite, by an external reformation ; and yet still retains his propriety in them, Matth. xii. 43, 44. For that departure is indeed no more than a politic retreat. Many that shall never escape the damnation of hell, have yet escaped the pollutions of the world, and that by the knowledge of the Son of God, 2 Pet. ii. 21.

Doth the Spirit of the Lord produce that glorious and supernatural work of faith in convinced and humbled souls ? In this also the hypocrite apes and imitates the believer, Acts viii. 13. " Then Simon

“ himself believed also.” Luke viii. 13. “ These are they which “ for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.”

Doth the precious eye of faith, discovering the transcendent excellencies that are in Christ, enflame the affections of the believing soul with vehement desires and longings after him? Strange motions of heart have also been found in hypocrites towards Christ and heavenly things. John vi. 34. “ Lord, evermore give us this bread, Matth. xxv. 8. “ Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.” With what a rapture was Balaam transported, when he said, “ Let me die “ the death of the righteous, and my last end be like his!” Numb. xxiii. 10.

Doth the work of faith, in some believers, bear upon its top branches the full ripe fruit of a blessed assurance? Lo! what strong confidences and high-built persuasions of an interest in God, have sometimes been found even in unsanctified ones? John viii. 54. “ Of “ whom you say, that he is your God; and yet ye have not known “ him.” To the same height of confidence arrived those vain souls mentioned in Rom. ii. 19. Yea, so strong may this false assurance be, that they dare boldly venture to go to the judgment-seat of God, and there defend it, Mat. vii. 22. “ Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?”

Doth the Spirit of God fill the heart of the assured believer with joy unspeakable and full of glory, giving them, *through faith*, a prelibation, or foretaste of heaven itself, in those first fruits of it? How near to this comes that which the apostle supposes may be found even in *apostates*, Heb. vi. 8, 9. who are there said “ to taste the good word “ of God, and the powers of the world to come.” What shall I say, if real Christians delight in ordinances, those that are none may also delight in approaching to God, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. It may be you will say, though the difference be not easily discernible in their active obedience, yet, when it shall come to suffering, there every eye may discern it; the false heart will then flinch, and cannot brook that work. And yet even this is no infallible rule neither; for the apostle supposes, that the *salamander* of hypocrisy may live in the very flames of martyrdom, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. “ If I give my body to be burnt, “ and have not charity.” And it was long since determined in this case, *Non pœna, sed causa facit martyrem*; so, that without controversy, the difficulty of distinguishing them is very great.

And this difference will yet be more subtile and undiscernible, if I should tell you, that as in so many things the hypocrite resembles the saint; so there are other things in which a real Christian may act too like an hypocrite. When we find a Pharaoh confessing, an Herod practising, as well as hearing, a Judas preaching Christ, and an Alexander venturing his life for Paul; and, on the other side, shall find a David condemning that in another which he practised himself, an Hezekiah glorying in his riches, a Peter dissembling, and even all the disciples forsaking Christ in an hour of trouble and danger: O

then ! how hard is it for the eye of man to discern betwixt chaff and wheat ? How many upright hearts are now censured, whom God will clear ? How many false hearts are now approved, whom God will condemn ? Men ordinarily have no clear convictive proofs, but only probable symptoms ; which, at most, can beget but a conjectural knowledge of another's state. And they that shall peremptorily judge either way, may possibly wrong the generation of the upright ; or, on the other side, absolve and justify the wicked. And truly, considering what hath been said, it is no great wonder that dangerous mistakes are so frequently made in this matter. But though man cannot, the Lord both can and will, perfectly discriminate them. " The Lord knoweth who are his," 2 Tim. ii. 19. He will have a day perfectly to sever the tares from the wheat, to melt off the varnish of the most resplendent and refined hypocrite, and to blow off the ashes of infirmities, which have covered and obscured the very sparks of sincerity in his people : he will make such a division as was never yet made in the world, how many divisions soever there have been in it. " And then shall men indeed return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked ; betwixt him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." Meanwhile, my soul, thou canst not better employ thyself, whether thou be sound or unsound, than in making those reflections upon thyself.

REFLECTIONS.

And is this so ? Then, Lord, pardon the rashness and precipitancy of my censorious spirit ; for I have often boldly anticipated thy judgment, and assumed thy prerogative, although thou hast said, *The censorious soul's reflection.* " Why dost thou judge thy brother ? And why dost thou set at nought thy brother ? We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live (saith the Lord) every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more," Rom. xiv. 10, 11, 12, 13. And again ; " He that judgeth me is the Lord. Let us therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart ; and then shall every man have praise of God," 1 Cor. iv. 4, 5.

What if God will own some of them for his sons, to whom I refuse to give the respect of brethren ? I may pass hasty and headlong censures upon others ; but where is my commission for so doing ? I want not only a commission, but fit qualifications for such a work as this. Can I pierce into the heart as God ? Can I infallibly discover the hidden motives, ends, and principles of actions ? Besides, O my soul, thou art conscious of so much falseness in thyself, that were there no other consideration, that alone might restrain thee from all unchari-

table and hasty censures. If others knew but what I know of myself, would they not judge as severely of me as I do of others?

2. Though I may not judge the final state of another, yet I may, and ought to judge the *soul's reflection*. state of my own soul; which is, doubtless, a more necessary and concerning work to me.

For since every saving grace in a Christian hath its counterfeit in the hypocrite, how needful is it for thee, O my soul, to make a stand here, and solemnly to ponder this question, Whether those things, whereon I depend, as my best evidences for the life to come, be the real, or only the common works of the Spirit? Whether they may be such as can now endure the test of the word, and abide a fair trial at the bar of my own conscience?

Come then, my soul, set the Lord before thee, to whom the secrets of all hearts are manifest: and in the awful sense of that great day make true answer to these heart-discovering queries: For though thou canst not discern the difference betwixt these things in another, yet thou mayest and oughtest to discern it in thyself: For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him!

1. Is my obedience uniform? am I the same man at all times, places and companies? Or, rather, am I not exact and curious in open and public, remiss and careless in private and secret duties? Sincere souls are uniform souls, Psal. cxix. 6. the hypocrite is no closet-man, Matth. vi. 5.

2. Doth that which I call grace in me oppose and mortify, or doth it not rather quietly consist with, and protect my lusts and corruptions? True grace tolerates no lust, Gal. v. 17. No, not the bosom, darling corruptions, Psal. xviii. 23.

3. Doth that which I call my grace, humble, empty, and abase my soul? Or rather, doth it not puff it up with self-conceitedness? All saving grace is humbling grace, 1 Cor. xv. 10. "But the soul which is lifted up, is not upright," Hab. ii. 4.

Lastly, Canst thou, my soul, rejoice and bless God for the grace imparted to others? And rejoice if any design for Christ be carried on in the world by other hands? Or, rather, dost thou not envy those that excel thee, and carest for no work in which thou art not seen?

But stay, my soul, it is enough: If these be the substantial differences betwixt special and common grace, I more than doubt, I shall not endure the day of his coming, *Whose fan is in his hand*. Do not those spots appear upon me, which are not the spots of his children? Woe is me, poor wretch! the characters of death are upon my soul! Lord add power to the form, life to the name to live, practice to the knowledge, or I perish eternally! O rather give me the *saint's heart* than the *angel's tongue*; the poorest breathing of the Spirit than the richest ornaments of common gifts! Let me never deceive myself or others in matters of so deep and everlasting consequence.

THE POEM.

IN eastern countries, as good authors write,
 Tares, in their springing up, appear to sight,
 Not like itself, a weed, but real wheat ;
 Whose shape and form it counterfeits so neat,
 That 'twould require a most judicious eye,
 The one from t'other to diversify.
 'Till both to some maturity be grown,
 And then the difference is eas'ly known.
 Even thus hypocrisy, that cursed weed,
 Springs up so like true grace, that he will need
 More than a common insight in this case,
 That saith, this is not, that is real grace.
 Ne'er did the cunning actor, tho' a slave
 Array'd in princely robes, himself behave
 So like a king, as this doth act the part
 Of saving grace, by its deep hellish art.
 Do gracious souls melt, mourn, and weep for sin ?
 The like in hypocrites observ'd hath been.
 Have they their comforts, joys, and raptures sweet ?
 With them in comforts hypocrites do meet.
 In all religious duties they can go
 As far as saints, in some things farther too ;
 They speak like angels, and you'll think within,
 The very spirit of Christ and grace hath been.
 They come so near, that some, like Isaac, take
 Jacob for Esau, this for that mistake :
 And boldly call (their eyes, with his, being dim)
 True grace, hypocrisy ; and duty, sin :
 Yea, many also, Jacob-like, embrace
 Leah for Rachel, common gifts for grace :
 And in their bosom hug it, 'till the light
 Discover their mistake, and clear their sight :
 And then, like him, confounded they will cry,
 Alas ! 'tis Leah, curs'd hypocrisy !
 Guide me, my God, that I may not, instead
 Of saving grace, nurse up this cursed weed.
 O let my heart, at last, by thee be found
 Sincere, and all thy workings on it sound !

CHAP. XIII.

Upon the Dangers incident to corn from Seed-time to Harvest.

*Fowls, weeds, and blastings do your corn annoy,
Even so corruptions would your grace destroy.*

OBSERVATION.

THERE are, amongst many others, three critical and dangerous periods between the seed-time and harvest. The first, when corn is newly committed to the earth, all that lies uncovered is quickly picked up by the birds; and much of that which is but slightly covered, is plucked up, as soon as it begins to sprout, by rooks, and other devouring fowls, Matth. xiii. 4. But if it escape the fowls, and gets root in the earth, yet then it is hazarded by noxious weeds, which purloin and suck away its nourishment, whilst it is yet in the tender blade. If by the care of the vigilant husbandman it be freed from choaking weeds; yet, lastly, as great a danger as any of the former still attends it; for oftentimes, whilst it is blowing in the ear, blastings and mildews smite it in the stalk, and cuts off the juice and sap that should ascend to nourish the ear, and so shrivels and dries up the grain whilst it is yet immature; whereby it becomes like those ears of corn in Pharaoh's vision, which were thin and blasted with the east-wind; or like the ears the Psalmist speaks of upon the house top, wherewith the reaper filleth not his arms.

APPLICATION.

TRUE grace, from the infancy to the perfection thereof, conflicts with far greater dangers, amongst which it answerably meets with three dangerous periods which marvellously hazard it: So that it is a much greater wonder that it ever arrives at its just perfection. For, (1.) No sooner hath the great Husbandman disseminated these holy seeds in the regenerate heart, but multitudes of impetuous corruptions immediately assault, and would certainly devour them, like the fowls of the air, did not the same arm that sowed them also protect them. It fares with grace, as with Christ its Author, whom Herod sought to destroy, in his very infancy. The new creature is scarce warm in its seat, before it must fight to defend itself. This conflict is excellently set forth in that famous text, Gal. v. 17. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

By flesh here understand the corruption of nature by original sin, and the sinful motions thereof;—by Spirit, not the soul, or natural spirit of man, but the Spirit of God in man, viz. those graces in man which are the workmanship of the Spirit, and therefore called by his name. The opposition betwixt these two is expressed by lusting, i. e.

desiring the mutual ruin and destruction of each other; for even when they are not acting, yet then they are lusting; there is an opposite disposition against each other; which opposition is both a *formal* and an *effective* opposition. There are two contrary forms; two men in every saint, Col. iii. 9, 10. From hence an effective opposition must needs follow; for as things are in their natures and principles, so they are in their operations and effects; workings always follow beings; fire and water are of contrary qualities, and when they meet, they effectually oppose each other. Sin and grace are so opposite, that if sin should cease to oppose grace, it would cease to be sin; and if grace should cease to oppose sin, it would cease to be grace. And this doth much more endanger the work of grace than any other enemy it hath; because it works against it more *inwardly, constantly, and advantageously*, than any thing else can do. (1.) More inwardly, for it hath its being and working in the same soul where grace dwells; yea, in the self-same faculties; so that it not only sets one faculty against another, but the same faculty against itself; the understanding against the understanding, and the will against the will; so that ye cannot do the good, nor yet the evil that ye would; not the good that ye would, because when the spirit moveth to good, and beats upon the heart by Divine pulsations, exciting it to duty, the flesh crosses and opposes it there; and if it cannot totally hinder the performance of a duty, yet it lames the soul upon the working-hand, whereby the performance is not so spiritual, free and composed, as it desires; nor yet the evil that you would commit, if grace were not there; because when lust stirs, in its first motions, grace puts a rub in its way. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. And if it cannot (which for the most part it doth) hinder the acting of sin, yet it so engages the will against it, that it is not committed with complacency and full consent, Rom. vii. 15. "What I do, I allow not." (2.) It opposes it more constantly, it is like a continual dropping; a man can no more fly from this enemy, than from himself. There is a time when the devil leaves tempting, Mat. iv. 11. but no time when corruption ceases from working. And, lastly, It opposes grace more *advantageously* than any other enemy can do, for it is not only always in the same soul with it, but it is there naturally; it hath the advantage of the soil which suits with it. And yet, oh the wonder of free grace! it is not swallowed up in victory, but it escapes this hazard.

But (2.) It soon meets with another, though it escapes this, even by temptations, which strike desperately at the very life of it; for these, like the weeds, with seemingly-loving embraces, clasp about it; and did not the faithful God now make a way to escape, instead of an harvest, we should have an heap? For, alas, what are we! to wrestle with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places?

Lastly, Sad relapses, like blasts and rustings, do often fade, and

greatly endanger it, when it is even ready for the harvest. Thus it fell out with David, whose last ways were not like his first; and yet by this these holy fruits were not utterly destroyed, because it is the seed of God, and so is immortal, 1 John v. 4, 5. And also because the promises of perseverance and victory made to it, cannot be frustrated; amongst which these are excellent, Isa. liv. 10. Jer. xxxiv. 40. 1 Cor. i. 8. Psal. i. 3. cxxv. 1. John iv. 15. So that here is matter of unspeakable comfort; though the flesh say, *Ego deficiam*, I will fail thee; though the world say, *Ego decipiam*, I will deceive thee; though the devil say, *Ego eripiam*, I will snatch thee away; yet as long as Christ saith, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, thy graces are secure in the midst of all these enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

1. This soul of mine was once plowed up by con-
The apostate's viction, and sown (as I thought) with the seed of
reflection. God. In those days many purposes and good reso-

lutions began to chink and bud forth, promising a blessed harvest: but oh! (with what consternation and horror should I speak it) the cares and pleasures of this life, the lusts and corruptions of my base heart springing up, have quite destroyed and choaked it; by which it appears it was not the seed of God, as I then imagined it to be; and now my expected harvest shall be an heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow, Isa. xvii. 11. I had convictions, but they are gone; troubles for sin, conscience of duties, but all is blasted, and my soul is now as a barren field, which God hath cursed.

Woe is me! I have revolted from God, and now that dreadful word, Jer. xvii. 5, 6. is evidently fulfilled upon me; "for I am like the heath in the desert, that seeth not when good cometh; my soul inhabits the parched places of the wilderness." Alas! all my formal and heartless duties were but as so many scare-crows in the field, which could not defend these slight workings from being devoured by the infernal fowls. Had these principles been the seed of God, no doubt they would have continued and overcome the world, 1 John ii. 19. Wretched soul! thy case is sad; it will be better with the uncultivated wilderness, than with such a miscarrying soul, unless the great Husbandman plow thee up the second time, and sow thy heart with better seed.

2. And are the corruptions of my heart to grace,
The careless soul's what fowls, weeds, and mildews are to the corn?
reflection. O what need have I then to watch my heart, and

keep it with all diligence; for in the life of that grace is wrapt up the life of my soul. He that carries a candle in his hand, in a blustering stormy night, had need to cover it close, lest it be blown out, and he left in darkness. O let me never say, God hath promised it shall persevere, and therefore I need not be so solicitous to preserve it, for as this inference is quite opposite to the nature of true grace and assurance, which never encourage to

carelessness, but provoke the soul to an industrious use of means to preserve it; so it is in itself an irrational and senseless conclusion, which will never follow from any scripture-promise; for although it is readily granted, that God hath made many comfortable and sweet promises to the grace of his people, yet we must expect to enjoy the benefits and blessings of all those promises, in that way and order in which God hath promised them; and that is in the careful and diligent use of those means which he hath prescribed, Ezek. xxxvi. 36, 37. For promises do not exclude, but imply the use of means, Acts xxvii. 31. I know my life is determined to a day, to an hour, and I shall live out every minute God hath appointed; but yet, I am bound to provide food, raiment, and physic to preserve it.

To conclude, let all doubting Christians reflect seriously upon this truth, and suck marrow and fatness out of it to strengthen and establish them *The doubting soul's reflection.* against all their fears: your life, your spiritual life hath for many years hung in suspense before you; and you have often said with David, I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul. Desponding, trembling soul! lift up thine eyes, and look upon the fields; the corn lives still, and grows up, though birds have watched to devour it; snows have covered it, beasts have cropped it, weeds have almost choaked it, yet it is preserved. And hath not God more care of that precious seed of his own Spirit in thee, than any husbandman hath of his corn? Hath he not said, "That having begun the good work in thee, he will perfect it to the day of Christ?" Phil. i. 6. Hath he not said, I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, John x. 28. Hast thou not many times said, and thought of it, as thou dost now, and yet it lives? O what matter of unspeakable joy and comfort is this to upright souls! Well then, be not discouraged, for thou dost not run as one uncertain, nor fight as one that beats the air, 1 Cor. ix. 26. But the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, the Lord knows who are his, 2 Tim. ii. 19. Though thy grace be weak, thy God is strong: though the stream seem sometimes to fail, yet it is fed by an ever-flowing fountain.

THE POEM.

TIS justly wondered that an ear of corn
Should come at last in safety to the barn:
It runs through many hazards, threat'ning harms,
Betwixt the sower's hands and reaper's arms.
The earth no sooner takes it from the sack,
But you may see behind the sower's back
A troop of thieves which would at once destroy
That seed in which lies hid the seed of joy.
This dangerous period past, it soon doth fall
Into a second, no less critical.

It shooteth forth the tender blade, and then
 The noxious weeds endanger it again.
 These clasp about it till they kindly choak
 The corn, as flattering ivy doth the oak.
 Are weeds destroy'd and all that danger past?
 Lo, now another comes, the worst at last:
 For when i' th' ear it blows, begins to kern,
 A mildew smites it, which you can't discern,
 Nor any way prevent till all be lost,
 The corn destroy'd with all your hopes and cost.
 Thus saving grace, that precious seed of joy,
 Which hell and nature plot how to destroy,
 Escapes ten thousand dangers, first and last,
 O who can say, now all the danger's past?
 'Tis like a crazy bark toss'd in a storm,
 Or like a taper which is strangely born
 Without a lanthorn in a blust'ring night,
 Or like to glimmering sparks, whose dying light
 Is still preserv'd: the roaring waves swell high,
 Like moving mountains in the dark'ned sky:
 On their proud backs the little bark is even
 Mounted unto the battlements of heaven;
 From thence dismounted, to the deeps doth slide
 Receiving water upon every side;
 Yet he whose voice the proudest waves obey,
 Brings it at last unto the quiet quay;
 The blust'ring winds strive with a fatal puff,
 To bring the taper to a stinking snuff:
 Their churlish blasts extinguish it, and then
 Our gentle breath recovers it again:
 The fainting sparks beneath the ashes lie,
 Where, choak'd and smother'd, they begin to die:
 But these collected, we do gently blow,
 'Till from faint sparks to lively flames they grow.
 Ev'n thus is grace preserv'd, thus kept alive;
 By constant wonders grace doth live and thrive.

CHAP. XIV..

Upon the Patience of the Husbandman for the Harvest.

*Our husbandmen for harvest wait and stay:
 O let not any saint do less than they!*

OBSERVATION.

THE expectation of a good harvest at last, makes the husbandman, with untired patience, to digest all his labours. He that

plows, plows in hope, 1 Cor. vi. 19. And they are not so irrational to think they shall presently be partakers of their hope ; nor so foolish to anticipate the harvest, by cutting down their corn before it be fully ripened : but are content to plow, sow, and weed it ; and when it is fully ripe, then they go forth into their fields, and reap it down with joy.

APPLICATION.

CAN a little corn cause men to digest so many difficult labours, and make them wait with invincible patience till the reaping time come? Much more should the expectation of eternal glory steel and fortify my spirit against all intercurrent hardships and difficulties. It least of all becomes a Christian to be of an hasty and impatient spirit. "Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the up-
"right in heart," Psal. xcii. 11. "Behold the husbandman waiteth," &c. Jam. v. 7. "Be patient, therefore, my brethren, for the coming
"of the Lord draws near." There are three great arguments to persuade Christians to a long-suffering and patient frame under sufferings. (1.) The example of Christ, Isa. liii. 7. To think how quietly he suffered all injuries and difficulties with invincible patience, is sufficient to shame the best of Christians, who are of such short spirits. I have read of one Elezarius, a nobleman, that when his wife wondered at his exceeding great patience in bearing injuries, he thus answered her : You know sometimes my heart is ready to rise with indignation against such as wrong me ; but I presently begin to think of the wrongs that Christ suffered ; and say thus to myself ; Although thy servant should pluck thy beard, and smite thee on thy face, this were nothing to what the Lord suffered : he suffered more and greater things ; and assure yourself, wife, I never leave off thinking on the injuries done to my Saviour, till such time as my mind be still and quiet. To this purpose it was well noted by Bernard, speaking of Christ's humiliation, Was Christ the Lord of glory thus humbled and emptied of his fulness of glory ? And shall such a worm as I swell ? (2.) The desert of sin, Lam. iii. 39. "Why doth the living
"man complain?" It was a good saying of the blessed Greenham ; when sin lies heavy, affliction lies light. * And it is a famous instance which Dr. Taylor gives us of the duke of Conde. I have read (saith he) when the duke of Conde had voluntarily entered into the incommodities of a religious poverty and retirement, he was one day spied and pitied by a lord of Italy, who, out of tenderness wished him to be more careful and nutritive of his person. The good duke answered, Sir, be not troubled, and think not that I am ill provided of conveniences ; for I send an harbinger before me, that makes ready my lodgings, and takes care that I be royally entertained. The lord asked him who was his harbinger ? He answered, the knowledge of

* Dr. Taylor's great Exemplar, p. 103.

myself, and the consideration of what I deserve for my sins, which is eternal torments ; and when with this knowledge I arrive at my lodgings, how unprovided soever I find it, methinks it is ever better than I deserve. (3.) And as the sense of sin, which merits hell sweetens present difficulties, so (to come home to the present similitude) do the expectations and hopes of a blessed harvest and reward in heaven. This made Abraham willing to wander up and down many years as a stranger in the world ; for he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. The hopes of such a harvest is encouragement enough to work hard, and wait long : Yet some Christians are so impatient of it, that they would fain be reaping before the time : but as God hath, by an unalterable law of nature appointed both the seasons of seed-time and harvest (which are therefore called the appointed weeks of the harvest) Jer. v. 24. and these cannot be hastened ; but when we have done all that we can on our part, must wait till God send the former and the latter rain, and give every natural cause its effect ; so is it in reference to our spiritual harvest ; we are appointed to sweat in the use of all God's appointments ; and when we have done all, must patiently wait till the divine decrees be accomplished, and the time of the promise be fully come ; " In due time we shall reap, if we faint not." To which patient expectation and quiet waiting for the glory to come, these following considerations are of excellent use.

1. As the husbandman knows when the seed-time is past, it will not be long to the harvest ; and the longer he waits, the nearer still it is : so the Christian knows, " It is but yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry," Heb. x. 37. " And that now his salvation is nearer than when he first believed," Rom. xiii. 11. What a small point of time is our waiting-time compared with eternity ? Yet a few days more, and then comes the long expected and welcome harvest.

2. The husbandman can find other work to do before the reaping time come ; he need not stand idle, though he cannot yet reap. And cannot a Christian find any work to do for God till he come to heaven ? O there is much work to do, and such work is only proper to this season ! You may now reprove sin, exhort to duty, succour the distressed ; this is good work, and this is your only time for such work ; the whole of eternity will be taken up in other employments. " I think it meet (saith Peter) as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir up your minds, knowing shortly that I must put off this tabernacle," 2 Pet. i. 13, 14. q. d. I know I have but a little time to work among you ; I am almost at heaven ; and therefore am willing to husband this present moment as well as I can for you. O Christians ! you need not stand idle ; look round about you upon the multitude of forlorn sinners ; speak now to them for God ; speak now to God for them ; for shortly you shall so speak no more ; you shall see them no more till you see them at Christ's bar ; God leaves

you here for their sakes, up and be doing : if you had done all you were to do for yourselves and them, he would have you to heaven immediately ; you should not wait a moment longer for your glory.

3. Husbandmen know, though they cannot yet gather in the precious fruits of the earth, yet all this while they are ripening and preparing for the harvest ! they would not house it green, or take it before its time. And is not this also my preparation-time for glory ? As God prepared heaven for his people by an eternal *decree* ; Mat. xxv. 34. by an act of *creation*, Heb. xi. 10. by the death of Christ, which made a purchase of it, Heb. x. 19, 20. and by his ascension into it, John xiv. 2, 3. So the reason why we are kept here, is in order to our fitting for it. Heaven is ready, but we are not fully ready ; the barn is fit to receive the corn, but the corn is not fit to be gathered into it. “ But for this self-same thing God is now working “ us,” 2 Cor. v. 5. he is every day at work by ordinances, and by providences, to perfect his work in us ; and as soon as that is finished, we shall hear a voice like that, Rev. xi. 12. “ Come up hither, “ and immediately we shall be in the spirit ;” for how ardently soever we long for that desirable day, Christ longs for it more than we can do.

4. The husbandman is glad of the first-fruits, that encourages him, though the greatest part be yet out : and have not you received the first fruits of that glory ? Have you not earnest, pledges, and first-fruits of it ? ’Tis your own fault, if every day you feed not upon such blessed comforts of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 23. Rom. v. 2. 1 Pet. viii. 9. O how might the interposing time, even all the days of your patience here be sweetened with such prelibations of the glory to come !

5. Husbandmen know it is best to reap when it is fit to reap ; one handful fully ripe is worth many sheaves of green corn. And you know, heaven will be sweetest to you when you are fittest for it ; the child would pluck the apple whilst it is green, but he might gather it casier, and taste it sweeter, by tarrying longer for it. We would fain be glorified *per saltum*. When we have got a taste of heaven, we are all in haste to be gone. Then, O that I had wings as a dove ! I would fly away and be at rest. Then we cry to God for ourselves, as Moses for his sister Miriam, “ Heal her [now] O “ God, I beseech thee !” Numb. xii. 13. Glorify me now, O Lord, I pray thee ! But, surely, as God hath contrived thy glory in the best of ways ; so he hath appointed for thee the fittest of seasons ; and whenever thou art gathered into glory, thou shalt come as a shock of corn in its season.

REFLECTIONS.

I have waited for thy salvation, O God ! Having received thy first-fruits, my soul longs to fill its bosom with the full ripe sheaves of glory : “ As

*The longing
soul's reflection.*

“ the hart panteth for the water brooks, so panteth my soul for thee, “ O God ! O when shall I come and appear before God ! ” I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ ! When shall I see that most lovely face ? When shall I hear his soul-transporting voice ! Some need patience to die : I need it as much to live. Thy sights, O God, by faith, have made this world a burden, this body a burden, and this soul to cry, like thirsty David, “ O that one would “ give me of the waters of Bethlehem to drink ! ” The husbandman longs for his harvest, because it is the reward of all his toil and labour. But what is his harvest to mine ? What is a little corn to the enjoyment of God ? What is the joy of harvest to the joy of heaven ? What are the shoutings of men in the fields to the acclamations of glorified spirits in the kingdom of God ? Lord, I have gone forth, bearing more precious seed than they ; when shall I return rejoicing, bringing my sheaves with me ? Their harvest comes when they receive their corn ; mine comes when I leave it. O much desired ! O day of gladness of my heart ! How long, Lord ! how long ! Here I wait as the poor man at Bethesda’s pool, looking when my turn will come, but every one steps into heaven before me ; yet Lord, I am content to wait till my time is fully come : I would be content to stay for my *glorification* till I have finished the work of my *generation* ; and when I have done the will of God, then to receive the promise. If thou have any work on earth to use me in, I am content to abide : behold, the husbandman waiteth, and so will I ; for thou art a God of judgment ; and blessed are all they that wait for thee.

But how doth my slothful soul sink down into the flesh, and settle itself in the love of this animal life ? How doth it hug and wrap up itself in the garment of this mortality, not desiring to be removed hence to the more perfect and blessed state ? The husbandman is indeed content to stay till the appointed weeks of the harvest ; but would he be content to wait always ? O my sensual heart ! is this life of hope as contentful to thee as the life of vision will be ? Why dost thou not groan within thyself, that this mortality might be swallowed up of life ? Doth not the scriptures describe the saints by their earnest looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life ? Jude 21. “ By their hastening unto the “ coming of the day of God,” 2 Pet. iii. 12. What is the matter, that my heart hangs back ? Doth guilt lie upon my conscience ? Or, have I gotten into a pleasant condition in the world, which makes me say as Peter on the mount, *It is good to be here* ? Or want I the assurance of a better state ? Must God make all my earthly comforts die, before I shall be willing to die ? Awake faith, awake my love ; beat up the drowsy desires of my soul, that I may say, “ Make “ haste my beloved, and come away.”

THE POEM.

NO prudent husbandman expects
The fruit of what he sows,
'Till every cause have its effects,
And then he reaps and mows:
He works in hope the year throughout,
And counts no labour lost,
If, when the season comes about,
His harvest quits his cost.
His rare example justly may
Rebuke and put to shame
My soul; which sows its seed and ease
And looks to reap the same.
Is cursed nature now become
So kind a soil to grace,
That to perfection it should come
Within so short a space?
Grace springs not up with seed and ease,
Like mushrooms in a night;
But rather by degrees increase,
As doth the morning light.
Is corn so dear to husbandmen?
Much more is heav'n to me;
Why should not I have patience then
To wait as well as he?
To promises, appointed years,
By God's decrees, are set;
These once expir'd, beyond its fears
My soul shall quickly get.
How small a part of hasty time,
Which quickly will expire,
Doth me within this world confine,
And then comes my desire.
Come, Lord, how long my soul hath gasp'd!
Faith my affections warms;
O when shall my poor soul be clasp'd
In its Redeemer's arms!
The time seems long, yet here I'll lie,
'Till thou, my God, do call:
It is enough, eternity
Will make amends for all.

CHAP. XV.

Upon the Harvest-Season.

*Corn, fully ripe, is reap'd, and gather'd in :
So must yourselves, when ripe in grace, or sin.*

OBSERVATION.

WHEN the fields are white to harvest, then husbandmen walk through them, rub the ears; and finding the grain full and solid, they presently prepare their scythes and sickles; send for their harvest-men, who quickly reap and mow them down; and after these follow the binders, who tie it up; from the field where it grew, it is carried to the barn, where it is threshed out; the good grain gathered into an heap, the chaff separated and burnt, or thrown to the dung-hill. How bare and naked do the fields look after harvest, which before were pleasant to behold? When the harvest-men enter into the field, it is (to allude to that, Joel ii. 3.) before them, like the garden of Eden, and behind them a desolate wilderness; and, in some places, it is usual to set fire to the dry stubble when the corn is housed; which rages furiously, and covers it all with ashes.

APPLICATION.

THE application of this, I find made to my hands by Christ himself, in Mat. xiii. 38, 39. "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels."

The field is the world; there both the godly and ungodly live and grow together, until they be both ripe; and then they shall both be reaped down by death: death is the sickle that reaps down both. I will open this allegory in the following particulars:

1. In a catching harvest, when the husbandman sees the clouds begin to gather and grow black, he hurries in his corn with all possible haste, and houses it day and night.

So doth God, the great Husbandman; he hurries the saints into their graves when judgments are coming upon the world; Isa. lvii. 1. "The righteous perish, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Methuselah died the year before the flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo; Pareus just before the taking of Heidelberg; Luther a little before the wars broke out in Germany. But what speak I of single saints? Sometimes the Lord houses great numbers together, before some sweeping judgment comes. How many bright and glorious stars did set almost together within the compass of a few years, to the astonish-

ment of many wise and tender hearts in England? I find some of them thus ranked in a funeral elegy :

The learned Twisse went first, (it was his right)
 Then holy Palmer, Burroughs, Love, Gouge, White,
 Hill, Whitaker, grave Gataker and Strong,
 Perne, Marshal, Robinson, all gone along.
 I have not nam'd them half; their only strife
 Hath been (of late) who should first part with life.
 These few who yet survive, sick of this age,
 Long to have done their parts, and leave the stage.

The Lord sees it better for them to be under-ground, than above-ground; and therefore, by a merciful providence, sets them out of harm's way.

2. Neither the corn nor tares can possibly resist the sharp and keen sickle, when it is applied to them by the reaper's hand; neither can the godly or ungodly resist the stroke of death when God inflicts it; Eccl. viii. 8. "No man can keep alive his own soul in the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war." The frail body of man is as unable to withstand that stroke, as the weak reeds or feeble stalks of the corn are to resist the keen scythe and sharp sickle.

3. The reapers receive the wheat which they cut down into their arms and bosom. Hence that expression by way of imprecation upon the wicked, Psal. cxxix. 6, 7. "Let them be as the grass upon the house top, which withers before it grows up; wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves, his bosom." Such withered grass are the wicked, who are never taken into the reaper's bosom; but as soon as saints are cut down by death, they fall into the hands and bosoms of the angels of God, who bear them in their arms and bosoms to God their father, Luke xvi. 22. For look, as these blessed spirits did exceedingly rejoice at their conversion, Luke xv. 10. and thought it no dishonour to minister to them, whilst they stood in the field, Heb. i. 14. So when they are cut down by death, they will rejoice to be their convoy to heaven.

4. When the corn and weeds are reaped and mowed down, they shall never grow any more in that field; neither shall we ever return to live an animal life any more after death, Job vii. 9, 10. "As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away; so he that goeth down to the grave, shall come up no more; he shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more."

Lastly, (to come home to the particular subject of this chapter) the reapers are never sent to cut down the harvest until it be fully ripe; neither will God reap down saints or sinners until they be come to a maturity of grace or wickedness. Saints are not reaped down until their grace is ripe, Job v. 26. "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, as a shock of corn cometh in its season." "Not that every godly man dies in such a full old age, (saith Mr. Caryl on that

‘place) but yet, in one sense, it is an universal truth, and ever full-filled ; for whensoever they die, they die in a good age ; yea, though they die in the spring and flower of their youth, they die in a good old age ; i. e. they are ripe for death whenever they die. Whenever a godly man dies, it is harvest-time with him, though in a natural capacity he be cut down while he is green, and cropped in the bud or blossom ; yet in his spiritual capacity he never dies before he be ripe. God ripens him speedily, when he intends to take him out of the world speedily ; he can let out such warm rays and beams of his Spirit upon him, as shall soon mature the seeds of grace into a preparedness for glory.’

The wicked also have their ripening-time for hell and judgment ; God doth with much long-suffering endure the vessels of wrath, prepared for destruction. Of their ripeness for judgment the Scripture often speaks, Gen. xv. 1 . “ The sin of the Amorites is not yet full.” And of Babylon it is said, Jer. li. 13. “ O thou that dwellest upon many waters ! thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.”

It is worth remarking, that the measure of the sin, and the end of the sinner, come together. So Joel iii. 13. “ Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest of the earth is ripe ; for the press is full, the fats overflow : for their wickedness is great.” Where, note, sinners are not cut down till they be ripe and ready. Indeed, they are never ripe for death, nor ready for the grave ; that is, fit to die ; yet they are always ripe for wrath, and ready for hell before they die. Now, as husbandmen judge of the ripeness of their harvest, by the colour and hardness of the grain ; so may we judge of the ripeness both of saints and sinners, for heaven or hell, by these following signs.

Three signs of the maturity of grace.

1. **W**HEN the corn is near ripe, it bows the head, and stoops lower than when it was green. When the people of God are near ripe for heaven, they grow more humble and self-denying, than in the days of their first profession. The longer a saint grows in the world, the better he is still acquainted with his own heart, and his obligations to God ; both which are very humbling things. Paul had one foot in heaven, when he called himself the chiefest of sinners, and least of saints, 1 Tim. i. 15. Eph. iii. 8. A Christian in the progress of his knowledge and grace, is like a vessel cast into the sea, the more it fills, the deeper it sinks. Those that went to study at Athens (saith Plutarch) at first coming seemed to themselves to be wise men ; afterwards only lovers of wisdom, and after that, only rhetoricians, such as could speak of wisdom, but knew little of it, and last of all, ideots in their own apprehensions ; still, with the increase of learning, laying aside their pride and arrogance.

2. When harvest is nigh, the grain is more solid and pithy than ever it was before ; green corn is soft and spungy, but ripe corn is

substantial and weighty : So it is with Christians ; the affections of a young Christian, perhaps are more feverous and sprightly ; but those of a grown Christian are more judicious and solid ; their love to Christ abounds more and more in all judgments, Phil. i. 9. The limbs of a child are more active and pliable : but as he grows up to a perfect state, the parts are more consolidated and firmly knit. The fingers of an old musician are not so nimble ; but he hath a more judicious ear in music than in his youth.

3. When corn is dead ripe, it is apt to fall of its own accord to the ground, and there shed ; whereby it doth, as it were, anticipate the harvest-man, and calls upon him to put in the sickle. Not unlike to which are the lookings and longings, the groanings and hastenings of ready Christians to their expected glory ; they hasten to the coming of the Lord, or, as Montanus more fitly renders it, they hasten the coming of the Lord ; (i. e.) they are urgent and instant in their desires and cries to hasten his coming ; their desires sally forth to meet the Lord ; they willingly take death by the hand ; as the corn bends to the earth, so doth these souls to heaven : This shows their harvest to be near.

Six signs of the maturity of sin.

WHEN sinners are even dead-ripe for hell, the signs appear upon them ; or by these, at least, you may conclude those souls not to be far from wrath, upon whom they appear.

1. When conscience is wasted, and grown past feeling, having no remorse for sin ; when it ceases to check, reprove, and smite, for sin any more, the day of that sinner is at hand, his harvest is even come. The greatest violation of conscience is the greatest of sins ; this was the case of the forlorn Gentiles, among whom Satan had such a plentiful harvest ; the patience of God suffered them to grow till their consciences were grown seared, and past feelings, Eph. iv. 19. When a member is so mortified, that if you lance and cut it never so much, no fresh blood, or quick flesh appears, nor doth the man feel any pain in all this, then it is time to cut it off.

2. When men give themselves over to the satisfaction of their lusts, to commit sin with greediness, then are they grown to a maturity of sin ; when men have slipped the reins of conscience, and rush headlong into all impiety, then the last sands of God's patience are running down. Thus Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner gave themselves over to wickedness and strange sins ; and then justice quickly gave them up for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

3. That man is even ripe for hell, that is become a contriver of sin, a designer, a student in wickedness. One would think it strange that any man should set his invention on work upon such a subject as sin is, that any should study to become a dexterous artist this way ! and yet the scripture frequently speaks of such, " whose bellies pre-

“pare deceit,” Job xv. 35. “who travail in pain to bring forth” this deformed birth, ver. 20. “who wink with their eyes,” whilst plodding wickedness, as men used to do when they are most intent upon the study of any knotty problem, Prov. vi. 13. These have so much of hell already in them, that they are more than half in hell already.

4. He that of a forward professor is turned a bitter persecutor, is also within a few rounds of the top of the ladder; the contempt of their light the Lord hath already punished upon them, in their obduracy and madness against the light. Reader, if thou be gone thus far, thou art almost gone beyond all hope of recovery. Towards other sinners God usually exercises more patience, but with such he makes short work. When Judas turns traitor to his Lord, he is quickly sent to his own place. Such as are again intangled and overcome of those lusts they once seemed to have clean escaped, these bring upon themselves swift damnation, and their judgment lingers not, 2 Pet. ii. 3, 20.

5. He that can endure no reproof or controul in the way of his sin, but derides all counsel, and like a strong current, rages at, and sweeps away all obstacles in his way, will quickly fall into the dead lake, Prov. xxix. 1. “He that being often reprovèd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” This is a death-spot, a hell-spot, wherever it appears. From this very symptom the prophet plainly predicted the approaching ruin of Amaziah, 2 Chron. xxv. 16. “I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened to my voice.” He that will not be timely counselled, shall be quickly destroyed.

Lastly, When a man comes to glory in his sin, and boast of his wickedness, then it is time to cut him down, “whose end is destruction, whose glory is in their shame;” Phil. iii. 19. This is a braving, a daring of God to his face; and with whomsoever he bears long, to be sure these are none of them.

You see now what are the signs of a full ripe sinner; and when it comes to this, either with a nation, or with a single person, then ruin is near, Joel iii. 13. Gen. xv. 16. It is in the filling up of the measure of sin, as in the filling up of a vessel cast into the sea which rolls from side to side, taking in the water by little and little till it be full, and then down it sinks to the bottom. Mean while, admirable is Divine patience, which bears with these vessels of wrath, whilst fitting for destruction!

REFLECTION.

The reflection of a growing Christian. 1. Cheer thyself, O my soul! with the heart-strengthening bread of this Divine meditation. Let faith turn every drop of this truth into a soul-reviving cordial. God hath sown the precious seed of grace

upon my soul ; and though my heart hath been an unkindly soil, which hath kept it back, and much hindered its growth, yet, blessed be the Lord, it still grows on, though by slow degrees ; and from the springing of the seed, and shooting forth of those gracious habits, I may conclude an approaching harvest : Now is my salvation nearer than when I believed ; every day I come nearer to my salvation, Rom. xiii. 11. O that every day I were more active for the God of my salvation ! Grow on, my soul, and add to thy faith virtue, to thy virtue knowledge, &c. Grow on from faith to faith ; keep thyself under the ripening influences of heavenly ordinances : The faster thou growest in grace, the sooner thou shalt be reaped down in mercy, and bound up in the bundle of life, 1 Sam. xv. 29. I have not yet attained the measure and proportion of grace assigned to me, neither am I already perfect, but am reaching forth to the things before me, and pressing towards the mark for the prize of my heavenly calling, Phil. iii. 12, 13. O mercy to be admired ! that I who lately had one foot in hell, stand now with one foot in heaven !

2. But the case is far different with me ; whilst others are ripening apace for heaven, *The reflection of the decaying Christian.* I am withering : many a soul plowed up by conviction, and sown by sanctification long after me, hath quite overtopped and outgrown me ; my sweet and early blossoms are nipped and blown off, my bright morning overcast and clouded : had I kept on, according to the rate of my first growth, I had either now been in heaven, or at least in the suburbs of it on earth ; but my graces wither and languish, my heart contracts and cools to heavenly things ; the sun and rain of ordinances and providences improve not my graces : how sad therefore is the state of my soul !

3. Thy case, O declining saint, is sad, but not like mine : thine is but a temporary remission of the acts of grace, which is recoverable ; but *The reflection of a hardening sinner.* I am judicially hardening, and “treasuring up to myself wrath against the day of wrath,” Rom. ii. 5. Time was when I had some tender sense of sin, when I could mourn and grieve for it ; now I have none at all : my heart is grown stupid and sottish. Time was when I had some conscientious care of duty, when my heart would smite me for the neglect of it ; but now none at all. Wretched soul ! what wilt thou do ? Thou art gone far indeed, a few steps further will put thee beyond hope : hitherto I stand in the field ; the long-suffering God doth yet spare me ; yea, spare me while he hath cut down many of my companions in sin round about me. What doth this admirable patience, this long-suffering, drawn out to a wonder, speak concerning me ! doth it not tell me, that the Lord is not willing I should perish, but rather come to repentance ? 2 Pet. iii. 9. And what argument is like his pity and patience, to lead a soul to repentance ? Rom. ii. 4. O that I may not frustrate

at last the end of a long-suffering God, lest he proportion the degree of his wrath, according to the length of his patience !

THE POEM.

WHEN fields are white, to harvest forth you go
 With scythes and sickles to reap down and mow.
 Down go the laden ears flat to the ground,
 Which those that follow having stitch'd and bound,
 'Tis carried home unto the barn, and so
 The fields are red where lately corn did grow.
 This world's the field, and they that dwell therein
 The corn and tares, which long have ripen'd been :
 Angels the reapers, and the judgment-day
 The time of harvest, when, like corn and hay,
 The fading flow'rs of earthly glory must
 Be mowed down, and level'd with the dust :
 The barns are heav'n and hell, the time draws nigh,
 When through the darken'd clouds and troubl'd sky,
 The Lord shall break ; a dreadful trumpet shall
 Sound to the dead ; the stars from heaven fall ;
 The rolling spheres with horrid flames shall burn :
 And then the tribes on earth shall wail and mourn.
 The judgment set, before Christ's awful throne
 All flesh shall be conven'd, and ev'ry one
 Receive his doom ; which done, the just shall be
 Bound in life's bundle, even as you see
 The full ripe ears of wheat bound up and borne
 In sheaves with joy into the owner's barn.
 This done, the angels next in bundles bind
 The tares together ; as they had combin'd
 In acting sin, so now their lot must be
 To burn together in one misery.
 Drunkards with drunkards pinion'd, shall be sent
 To hell together in one regiment.
 Adulterers and swearers there shall lie
 In flames among their old society.
 O dreadful howlings ! O the hideous moans
 Of fetter'd sinners ! O the tears ! the groans !
 The doleful lamentations as they go
 Chain'd fast together to their place of woe !
 The world thus clear'd, as fields when harvest's in,
 Shall be no more a stage for acting sin.
 With purifying flames it shall be burn'd,
 Its stately fabrics into ashes turn'd.
 Cease then, my soul to doat on, or admire
 This splendid world, which is reserv'd for fire.
 Decline the company of sinners here,
 As thou would'st not be shackled with them there.

CHAP. XVII.

Upon the Care of Husbandmen to provide for Winter.

*Your winter store in summer you provide :
To Christian prudence this must be applied.*

OBSERVATION.

GOOD husbands are careful in summer to provide for winter. Then they gather in their winter store ; food and fuel for themselves, and fodder for their cattle. “ He that gathers in summer, is a wise son : but he that sleeps in harvest is a son that causeth shame,” Prov. x. 5. A well chosen season is the greatest advantage to any action : which, as it is seldom found in haste, so it is often lost by delay. It is a good proverb which the frugal Dutch have among them :—*Bonus servatius faciet bonum bonifacium* :—A good saver will make a good benefactor. And it is a good proverb of our own, He that neglects the occasion, the occasion will neglect him. Husbandmen know that summer will not hold all the year ; neither will they trust to the hopes of a mild and favourable winter, but in season provide for the worst.

APPLICATION.

WHAT excellent Christians should we be, were we but as provident and thoughtful for our souls ? It is doubtless a singular point of Christian wisdom to foresee a day of spiritual straits and necessities ; and, during the day of grace, to make provision for it. This great gospel-truth is excellently shadowed forth in this natural observation, which I shall branch out into these seven particulars.

1. Husbandmen know there is a change and vicissitude of seasons and weather ; though it be pleasant summer weather now, yet winter will tread upon the heel of summer : frosts, snows, and great falls of rain must be expected. This alternate course of seasons, in nature, is settled by a firm law of the God of nature to the end of the world, Gen. viii. 22. “ Whilst the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, “ cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night, shall not “ cease.”

And Christians know, that there are changes in the right-hand of the Most High, in reference to their spiritual seasons. If there be a *spring-time* of the gospel, there will be also an *autumn* ; if a day of *prosperity*, it will set in a night of *adversity* : “ for God hath set “ the one over against the other,” Eccles. vii. 14. In heaven there is a day of everlasting serenity ; in hell a night of perfect endless horror and darkness ; on earth, light and darkness take their turns, prosperity and adversity, even to souls as well as bodies, succeed each other. If there be a gospel-day, a day of grace now current, it will have its period and determination, Gen. iii. 6.

2. Common prudence and experience enable the husbandman, in the midst of summer, to foresee a winter, and provide for it before he feel it; yea, natural instinct teaches this to the very birds of the air, and beasts of the field.

And spiritual wisdom should teach Christians to exercise their foreseeing faculties, and not suffer them to feel evil before they fear it. But, oh! the stupifying nature of sin! Though the stork in the heavens knows her appointed time, and the turtle, crane, and swallow the time of their coming, yet man, whom God hath made wiser than the fowls of the air, in this acts quite below them, Jer. viii. 7.

3. The end of God's ordaining a summer season, and sending warm and pleasant weather is to ripen the fruits of the earth, and give the husbandman fit opportunity to gather them in.

And God's design of giving men a day of grace, is to furnish them with an opportunity for the everlasting happiness and salvation of their souls; Rev. ii. 21. "I gave her space to repent." It is not a mere reprimand of the soul, or only a delay of the execution of threatened wrath, though there be much mercy in that; but the peculiar aim of this patience and bounty of God is to open for them a way to escape the wrath to come, by leading them to repentance," Rom. ii. 4.

4. The husbandman doth not find all harvest-seasons alike favourable: sometimes they have much fair weather, and meet with no hindrance in their business; other times it is a catching harvest, but now and then a fair day, and then they must be nimble, or all is lost.

There is also a great difference in soul-seasons; some have had a long and fair season of grace; a hundred and twenty years did God wait upon the old world, in the ministry of Noah. Long did God wait on the gainsaying Israelites, Isa. xlii. 14. "I have a long time held my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself." Others have a short and catching season, all lies upon a day, upon a nick of time, Acts xvii. 30.

5. A proper season neglected and lost is irrecoverable. Many things in husbandry, must be done in their season, or cannot be done at all for that year: if he plow not, and sow not in the proper season, he loses the harvest of that year.

It is even so as to spiritual seasons: Christ neglected, and grace despised, in the season when God offers them, are irrecoverably lost, Prov. i. 28. "Then (that is when the season is over) they shall call upon me, but I will not hear." Oh! there is a great deal of time, in a short opportunity; that may be done, or prevented, in an hour rightly timed, which cannot be done, or prevented, in a man's life-time afterwards. There was one resolved to kill Julius Cæsar such a day: the night before a friend sent him a letter to acquaint him with it: but he being at supper, and busy in discourse, said, to-morrow is a new day; and indeed it was *dies novissima*, his last day to him.

Whence it became a proverb in Greece, *To-morrow is a new day*. Our glass runs in heaven, and we cannot see how much or little of the sand of God's patience is yet to run down; but this is certain, when that glass is run, there is nothing to be done for our souls, Luke xix. 42. "O that thou hadst known, at least, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes."

6. Those husbandmen that are careful and laborious in the summer, have the comfort and benefit of it in winter: he that then provides fuel, shall sit warm in his habitation, when others blow their fingers. He that provides food for his family, and fodder for his cattle, in the harvest, shall eat the fruit of it, and enjoy the comfort of his labours, when others shall be exposed to shifts and straits. And he that provides for eternity, and lays up for his soul a good foundation against the time to come, shall eat when others are hungry, and sing when others howl, Isa. lxv. 13. A day of death will come, and that will be a day of straits to all negligent souls; but then the diligent Christian shall enjoy the peace and comfort that shall flow in upon his heart, from his holy care and sincere diligence in duties; as 2 Cor. i. 12. "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in sincerity and godly simplicity, we have had our conversation in this world." So Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 3. "Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart." A day of judgment will come, and then foolish virgins, who neglected the season of getting oil in their lamps, will be put to their shifts; then they come to the wise, and say, Give us of your oil, Matth. xxv. 8, 9. but they have none to spare, and the season of buying is then over.

7. No wise husbandman will neglect a fit opportunity of gathering in his hay and corn, upon a presumption of much fair weather to come; he will not say, The weather is settled, and I need not trouble myself; though my corn and hay be fit for the house, yet I may get it in another time as well as now.

And no wise Christian will lose a present season for his soul, upon the hopes of much more time, yet to come; but will rather say, Now is my time, and I know not what will be hereafter: hereafter I may wish to see one of the days of the Son of man, and not see it, Luke xvii. 22. It is sad to hear how cunning some men are to dispute themselves out of heaven, as if the devil had hired them to plead against their own souls; sometimes urging the example of those that were called at the eleventh hour, Mat. xx. 6. and sometimes that of the penitent thief: but, oh! to how little purpose is the former pleaded? they that were called at the eleventh hour were never called before, as these have been; no man had hired, that is, called or invited them to Christ; and for the thief (as Mr. Fenner rightly observes) it was a singular and extraordinary example. It was done

when Christ hanged on the cross, and was to be inaugurated ; then kings manifest such bounty, and pardon such crimes as are never pardoned afterwards. Besides, God was then in a way of working miracles ; then he rent the rocks, opened the graves, raised the dead, and converted this thief ; but God is now out of that way.

REFLECTIONS.

The careless soul's reflection.

1. I have indeed been a good husband for the world : with what care and providence have I looked out for myself and family to provide food to nourish them, and clothes to defend them against the asperities of winter ? mean while, neglecting to make provision for eternity, or take care for my soul. O my destitute soul ! how much have I slighted and undervalued thee ? I have taken more care for an horse, or an ox, than for thee : a well-stored barn, but an empty soul. Will it not shortly be with me, as with that careless mother, who when her house was on fire, busily bestirred herself to save the goods, but forgot the child (though it were saved by another hand) ? and then minding her child, ran up and down like one distracted, wringing her hands, and crying, O my child ! my child ! I have saved my goods, and lost my child ! Such will be the case of thee my soul, Matth. xvi. 26. Besides, how easy will my conviction be at the bar of Christ ? Will not my providence and care for the things of this life, leave me speechless and self-condemned in that day ? What shall I answer, when the Lord shall say, Thou couldest foresee a winter, and seasonably provide for it ; yea, thou hadst so much care of thy very beasts, to provide for their necessities : and why tookest thou no care for thy soul ? Was that only not worth the caring for ?

The presumptuous soul's reflection.

2. Is it so dangerous to neglect a present proper season of grace ? What then have I done, who have suffered many such seasons to die away in my hand, upon a groundless hope of future opportunities ? Ah deluded wretch ! what if that supposition fail ? Where am I then ? I am not the lord of time, neither am I sure, that he who is, will ever vouchsafe an hour of grace in old age, to him that hath neglected many such hours in youth ; neither indeed is it ordinary for God so to do. It is storied of Caius Marius Victorius, who lived about three hundred years after Christ, and to his old age continued a Pagan ; but at last being convinced of the Christian verity, he came to Simplicianus, and told him he would be a Christian ; but neither he nor the church could believe it, it being so rare an example for any to be converted at his age ; but at last seeing it was real, there was a shouting and gladness, and singing of psalms in all churches ; the people crying, Caius Marius Victorius is become a Christian ! This was written for a wonder : and what ground have I to think, that God will work such wonders for me, who have neglected his ordinary means of salvation ?

3. Bless the Lord, O my soul ! who gave thee a season, a day for eternal life, which is more than he hath afforded for thousands ; yea, bless the Lord for giving thee an heart to understand and improve that season. I confess I have not improved it as I ought ; yet this I can (through mercy) say, that however it fare in future times with my outward man, though I have no treasures or stores laid up on earth, or if I have, they are but corruptible, yet I have a blessed hope laid up in heaven, Col. i. 5. I have bags that wax not old. Whilst worldlings rejoice in their stores and heaps, I rejoice in these eternal treasures.

THE POEM.

OBERVE in summer's sultry heat,
 How in the hottest day
 The husbandman doth toil and sweat
 About his corn and hay :
 If then he should not reap and mow,
 And gather in his stores,
 How should he live, when, for the snow,
 He can't move out of doors ?
 The little ants, and painful bees,
 By nature's instinct led,
 These have their summer granaries
 For winter furnished.
 But thou, my soul, whose summer's day
 Is almost past and gone ;
 What soul-provision dost thou lay
 In stock to spend upon ?
 If nature teaches to prepare
 For temporal life, much rather
 Grace should provoke to greater care,
 Soul-food in time to gather.
 Days of affliction and distress
 Are hasting on apace ;
 If now I live in carelessness,
 How sad will be my case !
 Unworthy of the name of man,
 Who for that soul of thine,
 Wilt not do that which others can
 Do for their very kine.
 Think, frugal farmers, when you see
 Your mows of corn and hay,
 What a conviction this will be
 To you another day :
 Who ne'er were up before the sun,
 Nor brake an hour's rest

For your poor souls, as you have done
 So often for a beast.
 Learn once to see the difference
 Betwixt eternal things,
 And those poor transient things of sense,
 That fly with eagle's wings.

CHAP. XVII.

Upon reaping the same we sow.

*When from tare-seeds you see choice wheat to grow,
 Then from your lusts may joy and comfort flow.*

OBSERVATION.

GOD gives to every seed its own body, 1 Cor. xv. 38. At first he created every tree and herb of the field having its seed in itself, for the conservation of their *species*, and they all inviolably observe the law of their creation. All fruits naturally rise out of the seeds and roots proper to them. "Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles:" such productions would be monstrous in nature; and although the juice or sap of the earth be the common matter of all kind of fruits, yet it is specificated according to the different sorts of plants and seeds it nourishes. Where wheat is sown it is turned into wheat; in an apple-tree, it becomes an apple; and so in every sort of plants or seeds, it is concocted into fruit proper to the kind.

APPLICATION.

TRANSLATE this into spirituals, and the proposition shadowed forth by it, is fully expressed by the apostle, Gal. vi. 7, 8. "What a man sows, that shall he reap: They that sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and they that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." And as sure as the harvest follows the seed-time, so sure shall such fruits and effects result from the seeds of such actions. "He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity," Prov. xxii. 8. "And they that now go forth weeping, and bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them," Psal. cxxvi. 6. The sum of all this is, that our present actions have the same respect and relation to future rewards and punishments, as the seed we sow in our fields hath to the harvest we reap from it. Every gracious action is the seed of joy; and every sinful action the seed of anguish and sorrow to the soul that soweth it. Two things are sensibly presented to us in this similitude.

1. That as the seed sown is presently covered from our sight under

the clouds, and for some time after we see no more of it, and yet at last it appears again; by which it is evident to us that it is not finally lost: So our present actions, though physically transient, and perhaps forgotten, yet are not lost, but after a time shall appear again, in order to a retribution.

If this were not so, all good and holy actions would be to the loss of him that performed them. All the self-denial, spending duties, and sharp sufferings of the people of God, would turn to their damage, though not in point of honesty, yet in point of personal utility; and then also, what difference would there be betwixt the actions of a man and a beast, with respect to future good or evil? Yea, man would then be more feared and obeyed than God, and all souls be swayed in their motions, only by the influence of present things: And where then would religion be found in the world? It is an excellent note of Drexellius; ‘Our works (saith he) do not pass away ‘as soon as they are done, but as seed sown, shall, after a time, rise ‘up to all eternity: Whatever we think, speak, or do, once spoken, ‘thought, or done, is eternal, and abides for ever.’

What Zeuxus, the famous limner, said of his work, may be truly said of all our works; *Æternitati pingo*,—I paint for eternity. O, how careful should men be of what they speak and do whilst they are commanded so to speak and so to do, as those that shall be judged by the perfect law of liberty! James ii. 12. What more transient than a vain word? And yet for such words men shall give an account in the day of judgment, Matth. xii. 36. That is the first thing: Actions, like seed, shall rise and appear again in order to a retribution.

2. The other thing held forth in this similitude is, that according to the nature of our actions now, will be the fruit and reward of them then. Though the fruit or consequence of holy actions, for the present may seem bitter, and the fruit of sinful actions, sweet and pleasant; yet there is nothing more certain than that their future fruits shall be according to their present nature and quality, 2 Cor. v. 10. Then Dionysius shall retract that saying, *Ecce quam prospera navigatio a Deo datur sacrilegis*, Behold how God favours our sacrileges! Sometimes indeed (though but rarely) God causes sinners to reap in this world the same that they have sown; as hath been their sin, such hath been their punishment. It was openly confessed by Adonibezek, Judg. i. 7. “As I have done, so hath God requited me.”

Socrates, in his church history, furnishes us with a pertinent passage to this purpose, concerning Valens the Emperor, who was an Arian, and a bitter persecutor of the Christians: This man, when eighty of the orthodox Christians sailed from Constantinople to Nicomeda, to treat with him about the points of Arianism, and to settle

* *Drexellius de æternitate prope finem.*

the matter by way of dispute; the emperor hearing of their arrival, while they were yet in the harbour, and not a man landed, caused the ships to be fired wherein they were, and so consumed them all. Not long after, in his wars against the Goths, he was overthrown; and hiding himself in a little cottage, the enemy coming by, burnt it and him together. Thus this wretch reaped what he sowed, burning for burning, the very same in kind paid him again. It is not always so in this world; but so it shall be in that to come: The tables shall then be turned, and the *scene* altered; for shall not the Judge of all the world do righteously? * Diogenes was tempted to think, that God had cast off the government of the world when he saw the wicked prosper in their wickedness. On the same ground many have been tempted to Atheism; but then the world shall see distributive justice shining out in its glory, "Tribulation, anguish, and wrath to every soul of man that doth evil; but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good," Rom. ii. 9, 10. Then it will appear what seed we sowed, what lives we lived; "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil," Eccles. xii. 14.

REFLECTIONS.

The profane person's reflection. 1. This meditation may be to me what the hand-writing upon the wall was to that profane prince, Dan. v. 5, 6. and a like effect it should have upon me; for if all the actions of this life be seed sown for the next, Lord, what a crop, what a dreadful harvest am I like to have! How many oaths and curses, lies and vain words have I sown with my tongue! How have I wronged, oppressed, and over-reached in my dealings! Rushed into all profaneness, drunkenness, uncleanness, sabbath-breaking, &c. "as the horse rusheth into the battle!" And what shall I reap from such seed as this but vengeance and fury! These sins seemed pleasant in the commission, but, oh! how bitter will it be on their account? "What shall I do when God riseth up; and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?" Job xxxi. 14. Is it not reasonable and just, O my soul! that thou shouldest eat the fruit of thine own planting, and reap what thou hast sown? I thought nothing but profit and pleasure would spring from my lust: but now I see it is a root bearing gall and wormwood, Deut. xxix. 18. Wretched soul; what shall I do? By these actions I am undone. I have been the author of mine own ruin, twisted an halter with mine own fingers for the execution of mine own soul: Oh! let me rather taste the bitterness of sin, by repentance now, than enjoy its present pleasures which betray the soul to endless wrath!

* *Cum vidco, mala fata bonis, ignoscite quæso :
Sollicitor nullos esse putare Deos. Ovid.*

2. How have I also been deceived in this matter? I verily thought that glory and immortality would have been the fruit and product of my moral honesty and righteousness; that joy and peace had been seminally contained in those actions; but now I see such fruit can spring from no other root but special grace. Glory is disclosed from no other bud but holiness. Alas! all my planting and sowing was to little purpose, because I sowed not the right kind of seed; the best fruit I can expect from this is but a lesser degree of damnation.

The moral man's reflection.

Deluded soul! thy seed is no better than what the moral heathens sowed: And do I expect better fruit than what they reaped? Civility without Christ, is but a free slavery; and Satan holds me as fast in captivity by this, as he doth the profane by the pleasure of their lusts: Either I must sow better seed, or look to reap bitter fruit.

3. Mean while, bless the Lord, O my soul! who enabled thee to sow better seed; who kept thee watching, humbling thyself, and praying, whilst others have been swearing, drinking and blaspheming. This will yield thee fruit of joy in the world to come; yea, it yields present peace to thy conscience. These revenues are better than gold, sweeter than the honey, and the honeycomb; not that such fruits are meritoriously contained in these actions; I sow to myself in righteousness, but I reap in mercy, Hos. x. 12. This is the way in which God will save and glorify me. O then, let me be ever abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that my labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

The holy soul's reflection.

THE POEM.

'T WOULD be a strange and monstrous thing to see
 Cherries or plumbs grow on an apple-tree.
 Whoever gather'd from the thistle figs?
 Or fruitless grapes from off the worthless twigs
 Of pricking thorns? In nature still we find
 All its productions answering to their kind.
 As are the plants we set, or seeds we sow,
 Such is the fruit we shake, and corn we mow:
 And canst thou think, that from corruption's root
 Thy soul shall pluck the sweet and pleasant fruit
 Of spiritual peace! Whoever that was wise,
 Abus'd himself with such absurdities?
 Look what you sow, the very same you'll reap,
 The fruit of what you plant, be sure you'll eat,
 How are they baffled by a subtle devil,
 Who hope for heaven, whilst their ways are evil?
 Such reasonings here their credulous souls beguile,
 At which, in other things, themselves would smile.

Our present acts, though slightly passed by,
 Are so much seed sown for eternity.
 The seeds of prayers, secret groans and tears,
 Will shoot at last into the full-blown ears
 Of peace and joy. Blessed are they that sow
 Beside these *waters*, yea, thrice bless'd, that go
 Bearing such precious seed : Though now they mourn,
 With joyful sheaves they shortly shall return.
 Needs must the full-ripe fruits in heaven be good,
 When as the seed was glory in the bud.
 But oh ! the bitter, baneful fruits of sin,
 When all the pleasures sinners have therein,
 Like faded blossoms to the ground shall fall,
 Then they will taste the wormwood and the gall !
 What God and conscience now of sin report,
 You slight, and with their dreadful threat'nings sport :
 But he'll convince you then your ways are naught,
 As Gideon the men of Succoth taught.
 If sermons cannot, fire and brimstone must
 Teach men how good it is to pamper lust.
 When conscience takes thee by the throat, and cries
 Now wretch ! now sinner ! thou that didst despise
 My warnings ; learn, and ever learning be
 That lesson which thou ne'er wouldst learn of me.
 The stoutest sinner then would howl and roar,
 O sin I never saw thy face before.
 Is this the fruit of sin ? Is this the place
 Where I must lie ? Is this indeed the case
 Of my poor soul ! must I be bound in chains
 With these companions ? Oh ! are these the gains
 I get by sin ? Poor wretch ! I that would never
 See this before, am now undone for ever !

CHAP. XVIII.

Upon the Joy of Harvest-men.

*Great is the joy of harvest-men : yet less
 Than theirs whom God doth with his favour bless.*

OBSERVATION.

AMONG all earthly joys, these four sorts are noted in scripture, as the most excellent and remarkable. (1.) *Nuptial joys* ; the day of espousals is the day of the gladness of a man's heart, Cant. iii. 11. (2.) *The joy of children* : Though now it seems but a common *mercy* to most, and a burden to some, yet the people of God were wont to esteem it a choice mercy, and rejoiced greatly in it, John xvi. 21. there is joy that a man is born into the world.

(3.) *The joy of conquests and victories*, when men divide the spoil ; And, lastly, *The joy of harvest*. These two we find put together, as principal matters of joy, Isa. ix. 3. “ They joy before thee according “ to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. The joy of harvest is no small joy ; *Gaudium messis est messis gaudii* ; The joy of harvest, is the harvest of their joy. It is usual with men, when they have reaped down their harvest (or cut the neck, as they call it) to demonstrate their joy by shouting, and loud acclamations.

APPLICATION.

THUS, and unspeakably more than thus, do saints rejoice and shout for joy, when they reap the favour and love of God, for which they laboured in many a weary duty. This joy of harvest, as great as it is, and as much as carnal hearts are lifted up with it, is but a trifle, a thing of nought, compared with yours ; after they have sown to themselves in righteousness, and waited for the effects and returns of their duties with patience, and at last come to reap in mercy, either the full harvest in heaven or but the first-fruits of it on earth, yet rejoice, “ with joy unspeak- “ able and full of glory,” 1. Pet. i. 8. “ This puts more gladness “ into their hearts, than when corn and wine increase,” Psal. iv. 7. Carnal joys are but as soul-fevers, the agues of the inward man ; there is a great difference betwixt the unnatural inflammations of a feverish body, which waste the spirits, and drink up the radical moisture, and the kindly well-tempered heat of an healthy body ; and as much between the sweet, serene, and heavenly joy, which flow from the bosom of Christ in the hearts of believers, and those earthly delights which carnal hearts, in a sensual way, suck out of creature enjoyments. I will shew you the transcendency of spiritual joys, above the joy of harvest, in these eight particulars following.

1. You that joy with the joy of the harvest, are glad, because now you have food for yourselves and families to live upon all the year : but the Christian rejoiceth because he hath bread to eat that the world knows not of, Rev. ii. 17. Christ is the food of his soul, and his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, John v. 55. i. e. the most real and excellent food. You read Psal. lxxviii. 25. that men did eat angels food, i. e. Manna ; which was such excellent bread, that if angels did live upon material food, this would be chosen for them ; and yet this is but a type and dark shadow of Jesus Christ, the food of believers.

2. You rejoice when your harvest is in, because corn is virtually many other things besides food ; you can turn it into clothes to keep you warm, and many other necessities may be purchased by it ; but yet it is not like Christ, the object of a saint's joy ; though it answers many things, it doth not answer all things, as Christ doth ; turn it into what you will, it hath but a limited and respective usefulness ;

but Jesus Christ is all in all to believers, and out of him their faith can fetch all supplies; he is their health in sickness, their strength in weakness, their ease in pain, their honour in reproach, their wealth in poverty, their friend in friendlessness, their habitation when harbourless, their enlargement in bonds, the strength of their hearts, and life of their life; O! he is a full Christ! and whatever excellencies are scattered among all the creatures, do meet all in him, and much more.

3. You rejoice, when you have gotten in your harvest, because now you can free those engagements, and pay those debts which you have contracted. 'Tis a comfort to be out of debt; and you may lawfully rejoice that God gives you wherewith to quit your engagements, that you may owe no man any thing but love; but still the joy of harvest falls short of the joy of the saints; for you rejoice that you are or have wherewith to help yourselves out of men's debt: but they rejoice that they are out of God's debt; that his book is cancelled, and their sins pardoned: that by reason of the imputed righteousness of Christ, the law can demand nothing from them, Rom. viii. 1. O what matter of joy is this!

4. You rejoice, because now your corn is out of danger; all the while it was abroad, it was in hazard, but now it is housed you fear not the rain: but Christians rejoice, not because their corn is safe, but because their souls are so. All the while they abode in an unregenerate state, they were every moment in danger of the storms of wrath: but now being in Christ, that danger is over; and what compare is there betwixt the safety of a little corn, and the security of an immortal soul?

5. Your joy is but a gift of common providence. Turks and Heathens can rejoice with your joy; but the joy of a Christian, is a peculiar favour and gift of God. Corn is given to all nations, even the most barbarous and wicked have store of it; but Christ is the portion but of a few, and those the dearly beloved of God. Luther said of the whole Turkish empire, (where is the best and greatest store of corn) that it is but a crumb which the master of the family throws to the dogs. He that had more corn than his barns could hold, now wants a drop of water to cool his tongue. Christ is a gift bestowed only upon God's elect.

Your joy will have an end; the time is coming, that when you have reaped down your harvests, yourselves must be reaped down by death, and then you shall rejoice in these things no more. But when your joy is ended, then is the joy of saints perfected; they reap their harvest, when you leave your harvest; their consolation is everlasting.

7. God can separate your joy from these enjoyments, even while you have them, as well as when you leave them. It is one thing for a man to have riches and full barns, and another thing to have comfort in them, Eccl. v. 19, 20. But now the joy of Christians is a thing

inseparable from their enjoyment of Christ : indeed the sense of their interest may be lost, and so the acts of their joy intermitted ; but they always have it in the seed, if not in the fruit, Psal. xcvi. 11. " Joy is sown for the upright ;" he hath it still in the principle, and in the promise.

8. The joy of harvest-men, for the most part, is only in their harvest, and in such earthly things ; take that away, and their joy ceases. Earthly hearts are acquainted with no higher comforts ; but the people of God can joy in him, and take comfort in their earthly enjoyments too. And what comfort they take in these things, is much more refined and sweet than yours ; for they enjoy all these things in God, and his love in giving them, puts a sweetness into them, that you are unacquainted with. Thus you see, how far your joys fall short of theirs.

REFLECTIONS.

1. How have I rejoiced in a thing of nought, and pleased myself with a vanity ? God hath blessed me in my fields, and in my stores ; but not with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. My barns are full of corn, but my soul is empty of grace ; common bounty hath given me a fulness of the things of this life ; but what if the meaning of it should be to fat me for the day of slaughter ? What if this be the whole of my portion from the Lord ? What if the language of his providences to my soul should be this, Lo ! here I have given thee (with Ishmael) the fatness of the earth ? Thou shalt not say but thou hast tasted of thy Creator's bounty ; but make the most of it, for this is all that ever thou shalt have from me ; there be others in the world, to whom I have denied these things, but for them I have reserved better ; for the most part they are poor in this world, but rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. Is not this enough to damp all my carnal mirth ? Should my conscience give me such a memento as Abraham, in the parable, gave to Dives ; " Remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things." Ah ! what a cut would that be to all my comforts ? A man in a fever hath a lively colour, but a dying heart. I have an appearance, a shadow of comfort, but a sad state of soul.

A reflection for one that hath a full barn, but no Christ.

2. " Blessed be the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," Ephes.

i. 3. Though he hath not seen fit to give me much of this world in hand, yet it hath pleased him to settle a rich inheritance upon me by promise ; the hopes and expectations whereof yield my soul more true comfort than all the present enjoyments of this world could have done. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given me my portion in this life, that by keeping me from the enjoyment, hath also preserved me from the *snare*s of a prosperous estate ?

A reflection for one that hath Christ, but no barn.

Lord Jesus, I have no bags, I have no barns; but thou shalt be to me instead of all those things. When others rejoice in the fulness of their earthly comforts, I will rejoice in the fulness of my Christ: they have that which (though I have not) I shall not want; and I have that which all their riches cannot purchase. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

A reflection for one that hath a full barn and Christ too.

3. But, Lord, how am I obliged, above thousands, to love and praise thee? to bless and admire thee, who hast not only plentifully provided for my soul, but for my body too! who hast given me both the upper and the nether springs, heaven and earth; things present, and things to come? Thou hast not dealt so with all; no, not with all of thy own people: many of them are strangers to the mercies which I enjoy. God hath done great things for me, O my soul! what wilt thou do for God? The freer the condition is he hath placed me in, the more am I both obliged and advantaged for his service; and yet I doubt, it will be found, that many a poor Christian that labours with his hands to get his bread, redeems more hours for God than I do. Lord, make me wise to understand and answer the double end of this gracious dispensation! let me bestow the more of my time upon God, and stand ready to minister to the necessities of his people.

4. Oh! what an unhappy wretch am I! that have nothing either in hand, or in hope; am miserable here, and like to be so for ever; had I but an interest in Christ, as the godly poor have, that would sweeten all present troubles, and shew me the end of them. But, alas! I am poor and wicked, contemned of men, and abhorred of God; an object of contempt both to heaven and earth. Lord, look upon such a truly miserable object with compassion, give me a portion with thy people in the world to come, if thou never better my outward condition here! O sanctify this poverty; bless these straits and wants, that they may necessitate my soul to go to Christ: make this poverty the way to glory, and I shall bless thee to eternity that I was poor in this world.

THE POEM.

OFT have I seen, when harvest's almost in,
The last load coming, how some men have been
Wrapt up with joy, as if that welcome cart
Drew home the very treasure of their heart;
What joyful shoutings, hoopings, hollowing noise,
With mingled voices both of men and boys!
To carnal minds there is no greater mirth,
No higher joy, no greater heaven on earth.
He speaks pure paradoxes, that shall say
These are but trifles to what saints enjoy:

But they despise your sparks as much as you
Contemn their sun. Some that could never shew
A full stuff'd barn, on which you set your heart,
But glean, perhaps, the ears behind your cart;
Yet are the gleanings of their comfort more
Than all your harvest and admired store.
Your mirth is mix'd with sorrow, theirs is pure;
Yours like a shadow fleets, their joys endure.
God gives to you the husk, to them the pith,
And no heart-stinging sorrows adds therewith.
'Though at the gates of death they sometimes mourn,
No sooner doth the Lord to them return,
But sorrow's banish'd from their pensive breast;
Joy triumphs there, and smiles their cheeks invest.
Have you beheld, when, with perfumed wings,
Out of the balmy east, bright Phœbus springs,
Mounting th' Olympic hill, with what a grace
He views the throne of darkness, and doth chase
The shades of night before him? having hurl'd
His golden beams about this lower world,
How from sad groves, and solitary cells,
Where horrid darkness and confusion dwells,
Batts, owls, and doleful creatures, fly away,
Resigning to the cheerful birds of day:
Who in those places now do sit and chant,
Where lately such dire creatures kept their haunt?
Thus grief resigns to joy; sighs, groans, and tears
To songs triumphant, when the Lord appears.
O matchless joy! O countenance divine!
What are those trifles to these smiles of thine?
May, I, with poor Mephibosheth, be blest
With these sweet smiles; let Ziba take the rest.
My life! my treasure! thou shalt ne'er be sold
For silver-hills, or rivers pav'd with gold.
Wert thou but known to worldlings, they would scorn
To stoop their hearts to such poor things as corn:
For so they do, because thou art above
That sphere wherein their low conceptions move.

CHAP. XIX.

Upon the threshing out of Corn.

*More solid grain with greater strength you thresh,
The ablest Christians have the hardest lash.*

OBSERVATION.

HUSBANDMEN having to do with divers sorts of grain, some more tough and stubborn, others more free and tender, do not beat all alike on the threshing-floor ; but as they have threshals of several sizes, so they bestow on some grain more, on others fewer strokes, according to the different qualities of the grain to be threshed. This observation the prophet Isaiah hath, chap. xxviii. ver. 27. “ The fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is the cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin, but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod.” The manner of beating out the corn in former times was far different from that which is now in use among us : they had the cart-wheel, which was full of iron spokes or teeth, and the hoofs of beasts for the harder sort of grain, as wheat, rye, and barley ; a staff or flail for the fitches, and a rod or twig for the cummin ; all which instruments were proportioned according to the nature of the grain.

APPLICATION.

GOD having to do, in a way of correction, with divers sorts of offenders, doth not use the like severity with them all, but proportions his corrections to their abilities and strength, Jer. xxx. 11. “ I will not make a full end of thee, [but will correct thee in measure] and will not leave thee altogether unpunished :” (q. d.) Afflicted thou must be ; my respect to my own glory, and thy good, puts a necessity upon that ; but yet I will do it moderately : I will not lay on without measure or mercy, as I intend to do upon the enemies ; but will mete out your sufferings in a due proportion, even as a careful physician, in prescribing pills or potions to his patient, hath regard as well to the ability of the patient, as to the nature and quality of the disease ; even so thy God, O Israel, will not afflict thee according to the greatness of his power, and his wrath answerable thereunto, Psal. xc. 11. That would break thee to pieces, Psal. lxxviii. 38. Nor yet will he afflict thee according to the demerit of thy sin : as it shall be much less than what I could inflict, so it shall be less than thine iniquities deserve, Ezra ix. 13. Neither my power nor thy desert shall be the rule of my proceedings ; but I will do it with moderation and mercy, as thou art able to bear. I that have instructed the husbandman to proportion his instrument to the quality of the grain before him, will exercise the like wisdom and mildness

towards thee. And the similitude betwixt the husbandman's threshing his corn, and the Lord's afflicting his people, stands in these particulars.

1. The husbandman's end in threshing the corn is, to separate it from the husks and chaff; and God's end in afflicting his people is, to separate them from their sins, Isa. xxvii. 9. "In measure when it shooteth forth, he will debate with it," (i. e.) he will moderately correct them; and what the ends of those corrections are, the next words inform us, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." God uses afflictions as we use soap, to cleanse away filthiness, and fetch out spots, Dan. xi. 35. He aims not at the destruction of their persons, but of their lusts.

2. If the husbandman have cockle, darnel, or pernicious tares before him on the floor among his corn, he little regards whether it be bruised or battered to pieces by the thresher or not; it is a worthless thing, and he spares it not. Such cockle and tares are the enemies of God; and when these come under his flail, he strikes them without mercy; for these the Lord prepares a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth, which shall beat them to dust, Isa. xli. 15. "The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing-floor; it is time to thresh her," Jer. li. 33. And when that time is come, then (in allusion to the beast that was to tread out the corn) "Zion's horn shall be of iron, and her hoofs brass," Mic. iv. 13. He smites not his people according to the stroke of them that smote them; the meaning is, his strokes on them shall be deadly strokes: they shewed no mercy to Zion; and God will shew no mercy to them.

3. When the husks and chaff are perfectly separated from the grain, then the husbandman beats it no more. When God hath perfectly purged and separated the sins of his people, then afflictions shall come to a perpetual end; he will never smite them again: there is no noise of the threshing instrument in heaven; he that beat them with his flail on earth, will put them into his bosom in heaven.

4. Though the husbandman lays on, and beats his corn as if he was angry with it, yet he loves and highly prizes it; and though God strike and afflict his people, yet he sets a great value upon them; and it is equally absurd to infer God's hatred to his people from his afflicting of them, as the husbandman's hatred of his corn, because he threshes and beats it; Heb. xii. 6. "Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, and chasteneth every son whom he receiveth."

5. Though the husbandman thresh and beat the corn, yet he will not bruise or hurt it, if he can help it; though some require more and harder strokes than others, yet none shall have more than it can endure. And though the Lord afflict his servants, yet he will do them no hurt, Jer. xxv. 6. Some need more rods than others, but none shall have more than they can bear; the Lord knows the mea-

tures and degrees of his servants faith and patience, and accordingly shall their trials be, Psal. ciii. 13, 14. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knows their frame, he remembers they are but dust;" "He makes a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13. This care and tenderness over his afflicted, is eminently discovered in three particulars.

(1.) In not exposing them to, until he hath prepared them for, their trials, Luke xxiv. 49. "Tarry ye at Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." He gives them sometimes eminent discoveries of his love immediately before, and as a preparative to their sufferings, in the strength whereof they are carried through all.

(2.) Or if not so, then he intermixeth supporting comfort with their troubles; as you sometimes see the sun shine out while the rain falls. It was so with Paul, Acts xxvii. 23. "This night, (and it was a sad night indeed) there stood by me the angel of the Lord, whose I am."

(3.) In taking off the affliction when they can bear it no longer; 1 Cor. x. 13. "He makes a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it;" Psal. cxxv. 3. The rod is taken off, "when the righteous is even ready to put forth his hand to iniquity." It is a Jewish proverb, When the bricks are doubled, then comes Moses. And it is a Christian's experience, When the spirit is ready to fail, then comes Jesus, according to that promise, Isa. lvii. 16.

REFLECTIONS.

A reflection for persecutors. 1. How unlike am I to God, in the afflicting of his people? The Lord is pitiful when he smites them, but I have been cruel: he is kind to them, when most severe; but the best of my kindness to them, may fitly enough be called severity: God smites them in love; I have smitten them in hatred. Ah! what have I done? God hath used me as his hand, Psal. xvii. 14. or as his rod to afflict them, Jer. x. 7. but his end and mine have widely differed in that action, Isa. x. 7. I am but the scullion, or rather the whisp to scour and cleanse the vessels of glory; and when I have done that dirty work, those bright souls shall be set up in heaven, and I cast into the fire. If he shall have judgment without mercy, that shewed no mercy, how can I expect mercy from the Lord, whose people I have persecuted mercilessly for his sake?

A reflection for such as meet with no affliction. 2. Is the Lord's wheat thus threshed on the floor of afflictions; what then shall I think of my condition, who prosper and am let alone in the way of sin? Surely the Lord looks on me as on a weed, and not as his corn; and it is too probable, that I am rather reserved for burning, than for threshing.

Some there are whom God loves not so well as to spend a rod upon them, but saith, "Let them alone," Hos. iv. 17. but miserable is their condition, notwithstanding their impunity! For what is the interpretation but this? I will come to a reckoning with them altogether in hell. Lord, how much better is thy afflicting mercy, than thy sparing severity! Better is the condition of an afflicted child, than of a rejected bastard, Heb. xii. 7. Oh, let me rather feel thy rod now, as the rod of a loving Father, than feel thy wrath hereafter, as the wrath of an omnipotent avenger!

3. Well then, despond not, O my soul! *A reflection for an afflicted saint.*
Thou hearest the husbandman loves his corn, though he thresheth it; and surely, the Lord loves thee not the less, because he afflicts thee so much. If affliction then be the way to heaven, blessed be God for affliction! The threshing-strokes of God have come thick upon me; by which I may see what a tough and stubborn heart I have: if one stroke would have done the work, he would not have lifted up his hand the second time. I have not had a stroke more than I had need of, 1 Pet. i. 6. and by this means he will purge my sins: blessed be God for that! the damned have infinitely more and harder strokes than I, and yet their sin shall never be separated by their sufferings. Ah sin! cursed sin! I am so much out of love with thee, that I am willing to endure more than all this to be well rid of thee: all this I suffer for thy sake; but the time is coming when I shall be rid of sin and suffering together: meanwhile I am under my own father's hand: smite me he may, but hate me he cannot.

THE POEM.

THE sacred records tell us, heretofore
God had an altar on a threshing-floor,
Where threshing instruments devoted were
To sacred service; so you find them here.
I now would teach the thresher to beat forth
A notion from his threshold much more worth
Than all his corn; and make him understand
That soul-instructing engine in his hand.
With fewer strokes, and lighter will you beat
The oats and barley than the stubborn wheat,
Which will require and endure more blows
Than freer grain. Thus deals the Lord by those
Whom he afflicts: he doth not use to strike
Offending children with his rod alike;
But on the ablest shoulders doth impose
The heaviest burthens, and the less on those
Of weaker grace; he shews himself a God
Of judgments in his handling of the rod.

God hath a rate-book by him wherein he
 Keeps just accounts how rich his people be ;
 What faith, experience, patience, more or less
 Each one possesseth, and doth them assess
 According to their stock. Such as have not
 A martyr's faith, shall have no martyr's lot.
 The kinds, degrees, and the continuance
 Of all their sufferings to a circumstance
 Prescribed are by him who wisely sways
 The world, and more than's right on no man lays.
 Be man or devil the apothecary,
 God's the Physician : who can then miscarry
 In such a hand ? He never did or will
 Suffer the least addition to his bill.
 Nor measure, nor yet mercy he observes
 In threshing Babylon ; for she deserves
 His heaviest strokes ; and in his floor she must
 Be beaten shortly with his flail to dust.
 But Zion's God, in measure, will debate ;
 His children he may smite, but cannot hate ;
 He beats them, true, to make their chaff to fly,
 That they, like purged golden grains, may lie
 In one fair heap, with those bless'd souls that here
 Once in like manner thresh'd and winnow'd were.

 CHAP. XX.

Upon the winnowing of Corn.

*The fan doth cause light chaff to fly away ;
 So shall th' ungodly in God's winnowing-day.*

OBSERVATION.

WHEN the corn is threshed out in the floor where it lies mingled with empty ears, and worthless chaff, the husbandman carries it out altogether into some open place ; where, having spread his sheet for the preservation of the grain, he exposes it all to the wind ; the good, by reason of its solidity, remains upon the sheet, but the chaff, being light and empty, is partly carried quite away by the wind, and all the rest separated from the good grain into a distinct heap, which is carried away either to the fire, or dung-hill, as a worthless thing.

APPLICATION.

MEN have their winnowing-days, and God hath his ; a day to separate the chaff from the wheat, the godly from the un-

godly who shall be held up to the wind; but only the wicked shall be driven away by it. Such a day God hath in this world, wherein he winnows his wheat, and separates the chaff. There is a double fanning or winnowing of men here in this world; one is *doctrinally*, in which sense I understand that scripture, Matth. iii. 12. spoken of Christ, when he was entering upon his ministerial work: "His fan is in his hand; and he shall thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The preaching of the gospel is as a fan in Christ's hand: and it is as much as if John had thus told the Jews, that though there were many hypocritical ones among them, that had now a name and place among the people of God, and gloried in their church-privileges; yet there is a purging blast of truth coming which shall make them fly out of the church, as chaff out of the floor. Thus Christ winnows or fans the world *doctrinally*: the other is *judiciously*, by bringing sore and grievous trials and sufferings upon the churches for this very end, that those which are but chaff, i. e. empty and vain professors, may by such winds as these be separated from his people.

The church increases two ways, and by two diverse means; *extensively*, in breadth and numbers; and *intensively*, in vigour and power; peace and prosperity cause the first, sufferings and adversity the last: And well may a day of persecution be called a winnowing-day, for then are the people of God tossed to purpose, as corn in the sieve, though nothing but chaff be lost thereby. Of such a winnowing-day the prophet speaks, Amos ix. 9, 10. "I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth; all the sinners of my people shall die." q. d. I will cause great agitations and tossings among you by the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians, into whose countries you shall be dispersed and scattered; yet I will so govern those your dispersions by my *providence*, that not one good grain, one upright soul, shall eternally perish, but the sinners of my people, the refuse stuff, that shall perish.

To the same purpose speaks another prophet, Zeph. ii. 1, 2. "Gather yourselves together, (or as some read) fan yourselves, yea, fan yourselves, before the decree bring forth, and the day pass as the chaff." He doth not mean that the time shall pass as the chaff, but there is the day of affliction and distress coming, in which the wicked shall pass as the chaff before the wind; and yet, notwithstanding all these winnowings upon earth, much chaff will still abide among the corn; therefore God hath appointed another day for the winnowing of the world, even the day of judgment; in reference to which it is said, Psalm i. 4, 5. "The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away; therefore the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;" i. e. God hath a day wherein he will sift the

world like corn in a sieve, and then the wicked shall appear to be but chaff, which God will eternally separate from his wheat. I will not strain the similitude, but fairly display it in these seven particulars.

1. The chaff and wheat grow together in the same field, and upon the same root and stalk. In this wicked men are like chaff, who not only associate with the people of God, but oftentimes spring up with them in the same family, and from the same root or immediate parents, Mal. i. 2. "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Yet the one was wheat, the other chaff. Instances of this are infinite.

2. The husbandman would never endure the husks, chaff, and dry stalks to remain in the field; if it were not for the good corn's sake, he would quickly set fire to it, but that the corn is among it, which he highly prizeth: And be assured, God would never suffer the wicked to abide long in this world, were it not for his own elect that are dispersed among them: Except the Lord had such a remnant dispersed in the world, he would quickly set fire to the four quarters of it, and make it like Sodom, Isa. i. 9.

3. The chaff is a very worthless thing, the husbandman cares not what become of it; and of as little worth are wicked men, Prov. x. 20. "The heart of the wicked is little worth." The heart is the principal part of the man, and yet that is but chaff, no worth in it; his hands, his clothes, &c. are worth somewhat, but his heart is worth nothing.

4. Though chaff in itself be nothing worth, yet it is of some use to the corn while it is standing in the field; the stalk bears up the ear, and the chaff covers the grain, and defends it from the injury of the weather. Thus God makes wicked men of use to his people in outward society; they help to support and protect them in this world, Rev. xii. 16. "The earth helped the woman," i. e. worldly men for carnal ends helped the church, when a flood of persecution was poured out. The church often helps the world, it receives many benefits from the people of God; and sometimes God over-rules the world to help his church.

5. When the chaff and wheat are both brought forth and held up to the wind in one sieve, they fall two ways; the wheat falls down upon the floor or sheet, the chaff is carried quite away: So that although for a time godly and ungodly abide together, yet when this winnowing-time comes, God's wheat shall be gathered into his garner in heaven, the chaff shall go the other way, Mat. iii. 12.

6. If there be any chaff among the corn, it will appear when it is sifted in a windy day; it cannot possibly escape if it be well winnowed; much more impossible it is for any wicked man to escape the critical search of God in that day; the closet hypocrite shall then be detected, for God will judge the secrets of men, 2 Cor. xvi. "He will then bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart," 1 Cor. iv. 5.

7. *Lastly*, After corn and chaff are separated by the winnowing wind, they shall never lie together in one heap any more: The wicked shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but themselves thrust out: There is no chaff in heaven.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Am I an empty vain professor, that wants the pith and substance of real godliness? Then *A reflection for a*
 am I but chaff in God's account, though I grow *close hypocrite.*
 among his corn; the eye of man cannot discern my hypocrisy; but when he comes, whose fan is in his hand, then how plainly will it be detected? Angels and men shall discern it, and say, "Lo, this is the man that made not God his hope;" How shall I abide the day of his coming? Christ is the great heart-anatomist: Things shall not be carried then by names and parties, as they are now; every one shall be weighed in a just balance, and a *Mene Tekel* written upon every false heart: Great will be the perspicuity of that trial: My own conscience shall join with my judge, and shall then acknowledge, that there is not one drop of injustice in all that sea of wrath; and though I am damned, yet I am not wronged. The chaff cannot stand before the wind, nor I before the judgment of Christ.

2. Is there such a fanning-time coming? Why do not I then sift my heart every day by serious self-examination? No work more important to me, and yet how *A reflection for one*
 much have I neglected it? O my soul! thou *that neglects self-*
 hadst been better employed in searching thine *examination.*
 own estate in reference to that day, than in prying sinfully into the hearts, and censuring the conditions of other men: Judge thyself, and thou shalt not be condemned with the world; the work indeed is difficult, but the neglect dangerous: Were I within a few days to stand at man's bar, there to be tried for my life, how busy should I be every hour of the day in writing to any that I thought could befriend me, and studying every advantage to myself? And yet what a vast difference is there betwixt man's bar and God's? Betwixt a trial for my life, and for my soul? Lord, rouse up my sluggish heart by awful and solicitous thoughts of that day, lest I be found amongst that chaff which shall be burnt up with unquenchable fire.

5. Fear not, O my soul! though there be a blast coming which shall drive all the chaff into *A reflection for a*
 hell, yet it shall blow thee no harm. "I know *sincere soul.*
 "that when he hath tried me, I shall come forth
 "as gold," Job xxiii. 10. I confess I have too much chaff about me, but yet I am not altogether chaff; there is a solid work of grace upon my soul that will abide the trial: Let the judgment to come be as impartial and exact as it is possible to be, yet a grain of sincerity

cannot be lost in it: for "God will not cast away a perfect (i. e. an upright-hearted) man," Job viii. 20. He that is appointed to judge the world is mine! and his imputed righteousness will make me full weight in the balance. Bless the Lord, O my soul, for sincerity! this will abide, when common gifts and empty names will flee as the chaff before the wind.

THE POEM.

THE winnowing wind first drives the chaff away,
 Next light and hollow grains; those only stay
 Whose weight and solid substance can endure
 This trial, and such grains are counted pure.
 The corn for use is carefully preserv'd;
 The useless chaff for burning flames reserv'd.
No wind but blows some good, a proverb is;
 Glad shall I be if it hold true in this.
 O that the wind, when you to winnowing go,
 This spiritual good unto your souls might blow!
 To make you pause, and sadly ruminate,
 In what a doleful plight and wretched state
 Their poor souls are who cannot hope to stand
 When he shall come, whose fan is in his hand;
 His piercing eyes infallibly disclose
 The very reins, and inward part of those
 Whose out-side seeming grace so neatly paints,
 That, with the best, they pass for real saints.
 No hypocrite with God acceptance finds,
 But, like the chaff, dispers'd by furious winds.
 Their guilt shall not that searching day endure,
 Nor they approach the assemblies of the pure.
 Have you observ'd in autumn, thistle-down,
 By howling Æolus scatter'd up and down
 About the fields? Ev'n so God's ireful storm
 Shall chase the hypocrite, who now can scorn
 The breath of close reproofs; and like a rock,
 Repel reproofs, and just reprovers mock.
 How many that in splendid garments walk,
 Of high professions, and like angels talk,
 Shall God divest, and openly proclaim
 Their secret guilt to their eternal shame?
 This is the day wherein the Lord will rid
 His church of those false friends, who now lie hid
 Among his people; there will not one
 False heart remain, to lose our love upon.
 O bless'd assembly! glorious state! when all
 In their uprightness walk, and ever shall.

O make my heart sincere, that I may never
 Prove such light chaff as then thy wind shall sever
 From solid grain ! O let my soul detest
 Unsoundness, and abide thy strictest test !

— ❦ —

AN
 INTRODUCTION

To the Second Part of

HUSBANDRY.

=====

HOW is it, reader, have I tired thee,
 Whilst through these pleasant fields thou walk'st with me ?
 Our path was pleasant ; but if length of way
 Do weary thee, we'll slack our pace and stay :
 Let's sit a while, under the cooling shade
 Of fragrant trees ; trees were for shadow made.
 Lo here a pleasant grove, whose shade is good ;
 But more than so, 'twill yield us fruit for food :
 No dangerous fruits do on these branches grow,
 No snakes among the verdant grass below ;
 Here we'll repose a while, and then go view
 The pleasant herds and flocks ; and so adieu.

— ❦ —

CHAP. I.

Upon the Ingrafting of Fruit-trees.

*Ungrafted trees can never bear good fruit ;
 Nor we, till grafted on a better root.*

OBSERVATION.

A WILD tree naturally springing up in the wood or hedge, and never grafted or removed from its native soil, may bear some fruit, and that fair and beautiful to the eye ; but it will give you no content at all in eating, being always harsh, sour, and unpleasant to the taste ; but if such a stock be removed into a good soil, and grafted with a better kind, it may become a good tree, and yield store of choice and pleasant fruit.

APPLICATION.

UNREGENERATE men, who never were acquainted with the mystery of spiritual union with Jesus Christ, but still grow upon

on their natural root, old Adam, may, by the force and power of natural principles, bring forth some fruit, which, like the wild hedge-fruit we speak of, may, indeed, be fair and pleasant to the eyes of men, but God takes no pleasure at all in it; it is sour, harsh, and distasteful to him, because it springs not from the Spirit of Christ, Isa. i. 13. "I cannot away with it, it is iniquity," &c. But that I may not entangle the thread of my discourse, I shall (as in the former chapters) set before you a parallel betwixt the best fruits of natural men, and those of a wild ungrafted tree.

1. The root that bears this wild fruit is a degenerate root, and that is the cause of all this sourness and harshness in the fruit it bears; it is the seed of some better tree accidentally blown, or cast into some waste and bad soil, where not being manured and ordered aright, it is turned wild: So all the fruits of unregenerate men flow from the first Adam, a corrupt and degenerate root; he was indeed planted a right seed, but soon turned a wild and degenerate plant; he being the root from which every man naturally springs, corrupts all the fruit that any man bears from him. It is observed by Gregory pertinently to my present purpose, *Genus humanum in parente primo, velut in radice putruit*: Mankind was putrified in the root of its first parent; Matth. vii. 18. "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit."

2. This corrupt root spoils the fruit, by the transmission of its sour and naughty sap into all the branches and fruits that grow upon it; they suck no other nourishment, but what the root affords them, and that being bad, spoils all; for the same cause and reason, no mere natural or unregenerate man can ever do one holy or acceptable action, because the corruption of the root is in all those actions. The necessity of our drawing corruption into all our actions, from this cursed root Adam, is expressed by a quick and smart interrogation, Job xiv. 4. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." The sense of it is well delivered us (by Mr. Caryl, *in loc.*) This question (saith he) may undergo a twofold construction. First, thus, Who can bring a morally clean person out of a person originally unclean? and so he lays his hand upon his birth-sin. Or, Secondly, which speaks to my purpose, it may refer to the action of the same man; man being unclean, cannot bring forth a clean thing; i. e. a clean or holy action; that which is originated is like its original. And that this sour sap of the first stock (I mean Adam's sin) is transmitted into all mankind, not only corrupting their fruit, but ruining and withering all the branches, the apostle shews us in that excellent parallel betwixt the two Adam's, Rom. v. 12. "Wherefore, as by one man [one, not only *in individuo*, sed *in specie*, one representing the whole root or stock,] sin entered into the world:" not by imitation only, but by propagation; and this brought death and ruin upon all the branches.

3. Although these wild hedge-fruits be unwholesome and unpleasant to the taste, yet they are fair and beautiful to the eye: a man

that looks upon them, and doth not know what fruit it is, would judge it by its shew and colour, to be excellent fruit; for it makes a fairer shew oftentimes than the best and most wholesome fruit doth: even so, these natural gifts and endowments which some unregenerate persons have, seem exceeding fair to the eye, and a fruit to be desired. What excellent qualities have some mere natural men and women! what a winning affability, humble condescension, meekness, righteousness, ingenuous tenderness and sweetness of nature! As it was (hyperbolically enough) said of one, *In hoc homine, non peccavit Adam*: Adam never sinned in this man; meaning that he excelled the generality of Adam's children in sweetness of temper and natural endowments. What curious phantasies, nimble wits, solid judgments, tenacious memories, rare elocution, &c. are to be found among mere natural men! by which they are assisted in discoursing, praying, preaching and writing to the admiration of such as know them. But that which is highly esteemed of men, is abomination to God, Luke xvi. 15. It finds no acceptance with him, because it springs from that cursed root of nature, and is not the production of his own Spirit.

4. If such a stock were removed into a better soil, and grafted with a better kind, it might bring forth fruit pleasant and grateful to the husbandman; and if such persons (before described) were but regenerated and changed in their spirits and principles, what excellent and useful persons would they be in the church of God? And then their fruits would be sweet and acceptable to him. One observes of Tertullian, Origen, and Jerom, that they came into Canaan laden with Egyptian gold, i. e. they came into the church full of excellent human learning, which did Christ much service.

5. When the husbandman cuts down his woods or hedges, he cuts down these crab stocks with the rest, because he values them not any more than the thorns and brambles among which they grow; and as little will God regard or spare these natural branches, how much soever they are laden with such fruit. The threatening is universal, John iii. 3. "Except you be regenerate, and born again, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." And again, Heb. xii. 14. "Without holiness no man (be his natural gifts never so excellent) shall see God." Embellished nature, is nature still; "That which is born of the flesh, is *but* flesh," however it be set off with advantage to the eye of man.

REFLECTIONS.

1. To what purpose then do I glory in my natural accomplishments? Though I have a better nature than some others have, yet it is a cursed nature still. These sweet qualities and excellent gifts, do only hide, but not kill the corruption of nature, I am but a rotten post gilded over, and all my duties but hedge-fruit, which

*A reflection for
an accomplished na-
turalist.*

God makes no account of. O cunning thought ! that the unlearned shall rise and take heaven, when I with all my excellent gifts shall descend into hell. Heaven was not made for scholars, as such, but for believers ; as one said, when they comforted him upon his death-bed, that he was a knowing man, *a doctor of divinity* ; O, said he, I shall not appear before God as a *doctor*, but as a man ; I shall stand upon a level with the most illiterate in the day of judgment. What doth it avail me that I have a nimble wit, whilst I have none to do myself good ? Will my judge be charmed with a rhetorical tongue ? Things will not be carried in that world, as they are in this. If I could, with Berengarius, discourse *de omni scibili*, of every thing that is knowable ; or with Solomon, unravel nature from the *cedar*, to the *hyssop*, what would this advantage me, as long as I am ignorant of Christ, and the mystery of regeneration ? My head hath often ached with study, but when did my heart aeh for sin ? Methinks, O my soul ! thou trimmest up thyself in these natural ornaments, to appear before God, as much as that delicate Agag did, when he was to come before Samuel, and fondly conceited that these things would procure favour, or, at least, pity from him ; but yet think not, for all that, *the bitterness of death is past* : Say not within thyself, will God cast such a one as I into hell ? Shall a man of such parts be damned ? Alas ? Justice will hew thee to pieces, as Samuel did that spruce king, and not abate thee the least for these things ; many thousand branches of nature, as fair and fruitful as thyself, are now blazing in hell, because not transplanted by regeneration into Christ : and if he spared not them, neither will he spare thee.

2. I am a poor despised shrub which have no beauty at all in me, and yet such a one hath the Lord chosen to transplant into Christ, whilst he left many fragrant branches standing on their native stock, to be fuel of his wrath to all eternity !

A reflection for a true, but weak believer. O grace ! for ever to be admired ! Ah ! what cause have I to be thankful to free grace, and for ever to walk humbly with my God ! the Lord hath therefore chosen an unlikely, rugged and unpolished creature as I am, that pride may for ever be hid from mine eyes, and that I may ever glory in his presence, 1 Cor. i. 29. I now have the advantage of a better root and soil than any carnal person hath ; it will therefore be a greater shame to me, and a reproach to the root that bears me, if I should be outstripped and excelled by them ; yet, Lord, how often do I find it so ? I see some of them meek and patient, whilst I am rough and surly ; generous and noble, whilst I am base and penurious. Truly such a branch as I am, is no honour to the root that bears it.

THE POEM.

I AM a branch of that fair Eden tree
Which to mankind God hath ordain'd to be

The common stock : his situation good,
 His branches many, of himself a wood ;
 And like a cedar by the river fed,
 Unto the clouds his ample branches spread :
 Sin smote his root, then justice cut him down,
 And levell'd with the earth his lofty crown.
 What hope of branches when the tree's o'eturn'd,
 But like dry faggots to be bound and burn'd?
 It had been so, had not transcendent love,
 Which in a sphere above our thoughts doth move,
 Prepar'd a better stock to save and nourish
 Transplanted twigs, which in him thrive and flourish.
 In Adam all are curs'd ; no saving fruit
 Shall ever spring from that sin-blasted root ;
 Yea, all the branches that in him are found,
 How flourishing soever, must be bound
 And pil'd together (horrid news to tell !)
 To make an everlasting blaze in hell.
 God takes no pleasure in the sweetest bud
 Disclos'd by nature ; for the root's not good,
 Some boughs, indeed, richly adorn'd are
 With natural fruits, which to the eye are fair ;
 Rare gifts, sweet dispositions which attract
 The love of thousands, and from most exact
 Honour and admiration. You'll admire
 That such as these are fuel for the fire.
 Indeed, ten thousand pities 'tis to see
 Such lovely creatures in this case to be.
 Did they by true regeneration draw
 The sap of life from Jesse's root, the law,
 By which they now to wrath condemn'd are,
 Would cease to curse, and God such buds would spare :
 But out of him there's none of these can move
 His unrelenting heart, or draw his love.
 Then cut me off from this accursed tree,
 Lest I for ever be cut off from thee.

CHAP. II.

Upon the union of the Graff with the Stock.

*Whene'er you bud and graff, therein you see,
 How Christ and souls must here united be.*

OBSERVATION.

WHEN the husbandman hath prepared his graffs in the season of the year, he carries them, with the tools that are necessary for that work, to the tree or stock he intends to ingraff, and

having cut off the top of the limb in some smooth part, he cleaves it with his knife or chisel a little beside the pith, knocks in his wedge to keep it open, then (having prepared the graff) he carefully sets it into the cleft, joining the inner side of the barks of graff and stock together (there being the main current of the sap) then pulls out his wedge, binds both together (as in barking) and clays it up, to defend the tender graff and wounded stock from the injuries of the sun and rain.

These tender cyons quickly take hold of the stock, and having immediate coalition with it, drink in its sap, concoct it into their own nourishment, thrive better, and bear more and better fruits than ever they would have done upon their natural root; yea, the smallest bud, being carefully inoculated and bound close to the stock, will, in a short time, become a flourishing and fruitful limb.

APPLICATION.

THIS carries a most sweet and lively resemblance of the soul's union with Christ by faith; and indeed there is nothing in nature that shadows forth this great gospel-mystery like it: It is a thousand pities that any who are employed about, or are but spectators of such an action, should terminate their thoughts (as too many do) in that natural object, and not raise up their hearts to these heavenly meditations, which it so fairly offers them.

1. When a twig is to be ingrafted, or a bud inoculated, it is first cut off by a keen knife from the tree on which it naturally grew.

And when the Lord intends to graff a soul into Christ, the first work about it, is cutting work, Acts ii. 37. their hearts were cut by conviction, and deep compunction; no cyon is ingrafted without cutting, no soul united with Christ, without a cutting sense of sin and misery, John xvi. 8, 9.

2. When the tender shoot is cut off from the tree, there are, ordinarily, many more left behind upon the same tree, as promising and vigorous as that which is taken; but it pleaseth the husbandman to chuse this, and leave them.

Even so it is in the removing or transplanting of a soul by conversion; it leaves many behind it in the state of nature, as likely and promising as itself; but so it pleaseth God to take this soul, and leave many others; yea, often such as grew upon the same root; I mean, the immediate parent, Mal. i. 2. "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau."

3. When the graffs are cut off, in order to this work, it is a critical season with them: if they lie too long before they are ingrafted, or take not with the stock, they die, and are never more to be recovered; they may stand in the stock a while, but are no part of the tree.

So when souls are under a work of conviction, it is a critical time with them; many a one have I known then to miscarry, and never recover again: they have indeed for a time stood like dead graffs

in the stock, by an external dead-hearted profession, but never came to any thing; and as such dead graffs, either fall off from the stock, or moulder away upon it; so do these, 1 John ii. 19.

4. The husbandman, when he hath cut off graffs, or tender buds, makes all the convenient speed he can to close them with the stock; the sooner that is done, the better; they get no good by remaining as they are. And truly it concerns the servants of the Lord, who are employed in this work of ingrafting souls into Christ, to make all the haste they can to bring the convicted sinner to a closure with Christ. As soon as ever the trembling jailor cried, "What shall I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas immediately direct him to Christ, Acts xvi. 30, 31. They do not say, it is too soon for thee to act faith on Christ, thou art not yet humbled enough, but "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

5. There must be an incision made in the stock before any bud can be inoculated; or the stock must be cut and cleaved, before the cyon can be ingrafted; according to that in the poet,

Venerit insitio, fac ramum ramus adoptet; i. e.

To graffs no living sap the stocks impart,

Unless you wound and cut them near the heart.

Such an incision, or wound, was made upon Christ, in order to our ingrafting into him, John xix. 34. the opening of that deadly wound gives life to the souls of believers.

6. The graff is intimately united, and closely conjoined with the stock; the conjunction is so close, that they become one tree.

There is also a most close and intimate union betwixt Christ and the soul that believeth in him. It is emphatically expressed by the apostle, 1 Cor. vi. 17. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." The word imports the nearest, closest, and strictest union. Christ and the soul cleave together in a blessed oneness, as those things do that are glued one to another; so that look as the graff is really in the stock, and the spirit or sap of the stock is really in the graff; so a believer is really (though mystically) in Christ, and the Spirit of Christ is really communicated to a believer. "I live, (saith Paul) yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," Gal. ii. 20. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 16.

7. Graffs are bound to the stock by bands made of hay or flags, these keep it steady, else the wind would loose it out of the stock.

The believing soul is also fastened to Christ by bands, which will secure it from all danger of being loosed off from him any more. There are two bands of this union; the Spirit on God's part, this is the firm bond of union, without which we could never be made one with Christ, Rom. viii. 9. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" and *faith* on our part, Eph. iii. 17. "That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith." These hold strongly.

8. Though the stock be one and the same, yet all graffs do not

thrive and flourish alike in it ; some outgrow the rest, and those that grow not so well as the others do, the fault is in them, and not in the stock : so it is with souls really united to Christ ; all do not flourish alike in him, the faith of some grows exceedingly, 2 Thess. i. 3. the things that be in others are ready to die, Rev. iii. 2. and such souls must charge the fault upon themselves. Christ sends up living sap enough, not only to make all that are in him living, but fruitful branches.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Is it so indeed betwixt Christ and my soul, as it is betwixt the ingrafted cyon and the stock ? What honour and *Four comfortable* glory then hath Christ conferred upon me, a *reflections for a* poor unworthy creature ! What ! to be made one *regenerate soul.* with him, to be a living branch of him, to be joined thus to the Lord ! Oh ! what a preferment is this ! It is but a little while since I was a wild and cursed plant, growing in the wilderness amongst them that shall shortly be cut down and faggotted up for hell ; for me to be taken from amongst them, and planted into Christ. O my soul ! fall down and kiss the feet of free grace, that moved so freely towards so vile a creature ! The dignities and honours of the kings and nobles of the earth, are nothing to mine. It was truly confessed by one of them, that it is a greater honour to be a member of Christ, than the head of an empire. Do I say, a greater honour than is put upon the kings of the earth ? I might have said, it is a greater honour than is put upon the angels of heaven : For “ to whom of them said Christ, at any time, thou “ art bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh ? Behold what manner “ of love is this ! ” 1 John iii. 1.

2. Look again upon the ingrafted cyons, O my soul ! and thou shalt find, that when once they have taken hold of the stock, they live as long as there is any sap in the root ; and because he liveth, I shall live also, for my life is hid with Christ in God, Col. iii. 3. The graff is preserved in the stock, and my soul is even so preserved “ in Christ Jesus ! ” Jude, ver. 1.

3. Am I joined to the Lord as a mystical part or branch of him ? How dear art thou then, O my soul, to the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ ! What ! a branch of his dear Son ! What can God with-hold from one so ingrafted ? Eph. i. 6. “ All is yours, “ (saith my God) for ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s,” 1 Cor. iii. 23.

4. Once more, draw matter of instruction as well as comfort from this sweet observation : seeing God hath put all this honour upon thee, by this most intimate union with his Christ, look to it, my soul, that thou live and walk as becomes a soul thus one with the Lord : be thou tender over his glory : doth not that which strikes at the root, strike at the very life of the graff ? And shall not that which strikes

at the very glory of Christ, tenderly touch and affect thee? Yea, be thou tenderly affected with all the reproaches that fall upon him from abroad, but especially with those that redound to him from thine own unfruitfulness. Oh! disgrace not the root that bears thee! let it never be said, that any evil fruit is found upon a branch that lives and is fed by such a root,

THE POEM.

OH! what considering serious man can see
 The close conjunction of the graff and tree;
 And whilst he contemplates, he doth not find
 This meditation graffed on his mind?
 I am the branch, and Christ the vine;
 Thy gracious hand did pluck
 Me from that native stock of mine,
 That I his sap might suck.
 The bloody spear did in his heart
 A deep incision make,
 That grace to me he might impart,
 And I therefore partake.
 The Spirit and faith are that firm band
 Which binds us fast together;
 Thus we are clasped hand in hand,
 And nothing can us sever.
 Bless'd be that hand which did remove
 Me from my native place!
 This was the wonder of thy love,
 The triumph of thy grace!
 That I, a wild and cursed plant
 Should thus preferred be,
 Who all those ornaments do want,
 Thou may'st in others see.
 As long as e'er the root doth live,
 The branches are not dry;
 Whilst Christ hath grace and life to give,
 My soul can never die.
 O blessed Saviour! never could
 A graff cleave to the tree
 More close than thy poor creature would
 United be with thee.
 My soul, dishonour not the root,
 'Twill be a shame for thee
 To want the choicest sorts of fruit,
 And yet thus graffed be.
 Thus you may shake from graffs, before they blow,
 More precious fruit than e'er on trees did grow.

CHAP. III.

Upon the Gathering in of Fruits in Autumn.

*When trees are shak'd, but little fruit remains,
Just such a remnant to the Lord pertains.*

OBSERVATION.

IT is a pleasant sight in autumn to see the fruitful branches hanging full of clusters, which weigh the boughs to the ground.

*Aspice curvatos pomorum pondere ramos,
Ut sua quod peperit vix ferat arbor onus.*

Which I may thus English.

*O what a pleasant sight it is to see,
The fruitful clusters bowing down the tree !*

But these laden branches are soon eased of their burden ; for as soon as they are ripe, the husbandman ascends the tree, and shaking the limbs with all his might, causes a fruitful shower to fall like hail-stones upon the ground below ; which being gathered to a heap, are carried to the pound, broken all to pieces in a trough, and squeezed to a dry lump in the press, whence all their juice and moisture runs into the fat. How few escape this fat of all those multitudes that grow in the orchard ? If you look upon the trees, you may possibly see here one, and there another, two or three upon the utmost branches, but nothing in comparison to the vast number that are thus used.

APPLICATION.

THESE small remains of fruit, which are either left upon the tree, or gathered in for an hoard, do well resemble that small number of God's elect in the world, which free-grace hath reserved out of the general ruin of mankind. Four things are excellently shadowed forth to us by this similitude.

1. You see in a fruitful autumn, the trees even oppressed and overladen with the weight of their own fruits, before the shaking time comes, and then they are eased of their burden. Thus the whole creation groans under the weight of their sins, who inhabit it, Rom. viii. 22. the creatures are in bondage, and by an elegant Prosopopeia, are said, both to groan and wait for deliverance. The original sin of man brought an original curse, which burdens the creature, Gen. iii. 17. " Cursed is the ground for thy sake ; and the actual sin of man " brings actual curses upon the creature, Psalm cvii. 34. Thus the inhabitants of the world load and burden it, as the limbs of a tree are burdened, and sometimes broken with the weight of their own fruit.

2. You may observe in your orchards, every year, what abundance of fruits daily fall, either by storms, or of their own accord ; but when the shaking time comes, then the ground is covered all over

with fruit. Thus it is with the world, that mystical tree, with respect to men that inhabit it; there is not a year, a day, or hour, in which some drop not, as it were, of their own accord, by a natural death; and sometimes wars and epidemical plagues blow down thousands together into their graves; these are as high winds in a fruitful orchard; but when the shaking time, the autumn of the world, comes, then all its inhabitants shall be shaken down together, either by death, or a translation equivalent thereunto.

3. When fruits are shaken down from their trees, then the husbandman separates them; the far greater part for the pound, and some few reserved for an hoard, which are brought to his table, and eaten with pleasure. This excellently shadows forth that great separation, which Christ will make in the end of the world, when some shall be cast into the wine-press of the Almighty's wrath, and others preserved for glory.

4. Those fruits which are preserved on the tree, or in the hoard, are comparatively, but an handful to those that are broken in the pound; alas! it is scarce one of a thousand, and such a small remnant of elected souls hath God reserved for glory.

I look upon the world as a great tree, consisting of four large limbs or branches; this branch or division of it on which we grow, hath, doubtless, a greater number of God's elect upon it than the other three; and yet, when I look with a serious and considering eye upon this fruitful European branch, and see how much rotten and withered fruit there grows upon it, it makes me say, as Chrysostom did of his populous Antioch; Ah, how small a remnant hath *Jesus Christ* among these vast numbers! "Many indeed are called, but ah! how few are chosen?" Mat. xx. 16. Alas! they are but as the gleanings when the vintage is done; here and there one upon its utmost branches: to allude to that, Isa. xvii. 6. It was a sad observation which that searching scholar, Mr. Brerewood, long since made upon the world; that, dividing it into thirty equal parts, he found no less than nineteen of them wholly overspread with idolatry and heathenish darkness; and of the eleven remaining parts, no less than six are Mahometans; so that there remains but five of thirty which profess the Christian religion at large; and the far greater part of these remaining five are enveloped and drowned in popish darkness! so that you see the reformed Protestant religion is confined to a small spot of ground indeed. Now, if from these we subtract all the grossly ignorant, openly profane, merely civil, and secretly hypocritical, judge then in yourselves, how small a scantling of the world falls to Christ's share.

Well might Christ say, Mat. vii. 14. "Narrow is the way, and strait is the gate that leadeth unto life: and few there be that find it;" And again, Luke xii. 32. "Fear not little flock." The large piece goes to the devil; a little remnant is Christ's, Rom. ix. 27. Saints in scripture, are called *jewels*, Mal. iii. 17. Precious pearls

and diamonds, which the Latins call *Uniones*. *Quia nulli duo simul reperiuntur*, (saith Pliny) because nature gives them not by pairs, but one by one: how many pebbles to one pearl! Suitable to this notion, is that complaint of the prophet, Mic. vii. 1, 2. “Wo is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer-fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat; my soul desired the first ripe fruits; the good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none, (i. e. none comparatively) upright among men.” The prophet alludes to a poor hungry man, that, after the gathering time is past, comes into an orchard desiring some choice fruit to eat; but, alas; he finds none; there is no cluster; possibly here and there one after the shaking time. True saints are the world’s rarities.

REFLECTIONS.

A reflection for one that follows the example of the multitude.

1. What then will be my lot, when that great shaking time shall come, who have followed the multitude, and gone with the tide of the world? How, even when I have been pressed to strictness and singular diligence in the matters of salvation, and told what a narrow way the way of life is, have I put it off with this? If it be so, then wo to thousands! Ah, foolish heart! Thousands, and ten thousands shall be woful and miserable, indeed, to all eternity! Will it be any mitigation of my misery, that I shall have thousands of miserable companions with me in hell? Or, will it be admitted for a good plea at the judgment-seat, Lord, I did as the generality of my neighbours in the world did; except it were here and there a more precise person, I saw none but lived as I lived. Ah, foolish sinner! is it not better to go to heaven alone, than to hell with company? The worst courses have always the most imitators; and the road to destruction is thronged with passengers.

2. And how little better is my condition, who have often fathered the wickedness of my own heart, upon the encouragement of mercy? Thus hath my heart pleaded against strictness and duty; God is a merciful God, and will not be so severe with the

A reflection for an abuser of mercy.

world, to damn so many thousands as are in my condition. Deluded soul! if God had damned the whole race of Adam, he had done them no more wrong: yea, there is more mercy in saving but one man, than there is of severity and rigour in damning all. How many drunkards and adulterers have lived and died with thy plea in their mouths, “God is a merciful God?” But yet his word expressly saith, “Be not deceived; such shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” 1 Cor. vi. 9. God, indeed, is a God of infinite mercy; but he will never exercise his mercy to the prejudice of his truth.

3. Oh! what rich grace is here, That in a general shipwreck mer-

ey should cast forth a line or plank to save me !
 That when millions perish, I, with a few more *A reflection for an*
 should escape that perdition ! Was it the Father's *elect soul.*
 good pleasure to bestow the kingdom upon a lit-
 tle flock, and to make me one of that number ? What singular obli-
 gations hath *mercy* put upon my soul ! The fewer are saved, the more
 cause have they that are to admire their salvation. If but one of a
 thousand had been damned, yet my salvation would have been an act
 of infinite grace ; but when scarce one of a thousand are saved, what
 shall I call that grace that cast my lot among them !

THE POEM.

HE that with spir'tual eyes in autumn sees
 The heaps of fruit which fall from shaken trees,
 Like storms of hail-stones, and can hardly find
 One of a thousand that remains behind ;
 Methinks this meditation should awake
 His soul, and make it like those trees to shake.
 Of all the clusters, which so lately grew
 Upon those trees, how few can they now shew ?
 Here one, and there another ; two or three
 Upon the utmost branches of the tree.
 The greatest numbers to the pound are borne.
 Squeez'd in the trough, and all to pieces torn.
 This little handful's left, to shadow forth
 To me God's remnant in this peopl'd earth.
 If o'er the whole terrestrial globe I look,
 The gospel visits but a little nook.
 The rest with horrid darkness overspread,
 Are fast asleep, yea, in transgression dead.
 Whole droves to hell the devil daily drives ;
 Not one amongst them once resists or strives.
 And in this little heaven-enlight'ned spot
 How fast an interest hath Satan got ?
 But few of holiness profession make ;
 And if from those that do profess, I take
 The self-deluding hypocrites, I fear
 To think how few'll remain that are sincere.
 O tax not mercy that it saves so few ;
 But rather wonder that the Lord should shew
 Mercy to any. Quarrel not with grace ;
 But for thyself God's gracious terms embrace.
 When all were shipwreck'd, thou should'st wonder more
 To find thyself so strangely cast ashore,
 And there to meet with any that can tell
 How narrowly they also 'scap'd from hell.
 The smaller number mercy saves, the higher
 Engagements lie on thee still to admire.

Had the whole species perish'd in their sin,
 And not one individual sav'd been,
 Yet every tongue before him must be mute
 Confess his righteousness, but not dispute.
 Or had the hand of mercy which is free,
 Taken another, and pass'd over me ;
 I still must justify him, and my tongue
 Confess my Maker had done me no wrong,
 But if my name he please to let me see
 Enroll'd among those few that saved be,
 What admiration should such mercy move !
 What thanks, and praise, and everlasting love !

CHAP. IV.

Upon the Cutting down of dead Trees.

*Dead barren trees you for the fire prepare ;
 In such a case all fruitless persons are.*

OBSERVATION.

AFTER many years patience, in the use of all means to recover a fruit-tree, if the husbandman see it be quite dead, and that there can be no more expectation of any fruit from it, he brings his ax, and hews it down by the root ; and from the orchard it is carried to the fire, it being then fit for nothing else ; he reckons it imprudent to let such a useless tree abide in good ground, where another may be planted in its room, that will better pay for the ground it stands in. I myself once saw a large orchard of fair but fruitless trees all rooted up, rived broad, and ricked up for the fire.

APPLICATION.

THUS deals the Lord by useless and barren professors who do but cumber his ground, Matth. iii. 10. “ And now also the ax is laid “ to the root of the trees ; therefore every tree that brings not forth “ good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.” And Luke xiii. 7. “ Then said the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three years I “ came seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none ; cut it down ; “ why cumbereth it the ground ? ” These three years, alluding to the time of his ministry, he being at that time entering upon the last half-year, as one observes, by harmonizing the evangelists ; so long he had waited for the fruit of his ministry among those dead-hearted Jews ; now his patience is even at an end : cut them down (saith he) why cumber they the ground ? I will plant others, (viz. the Gentiles) in their room. This hewing down of the barren tree doth, in a lively manner, shadow forth God’s judicial proceedings against formal

and empty professors under the gospel : and the resemblance clearly holds in these following particulars :

1. The tree that is to be hewn down for the fire, stands in the orchard among other flourishing trees, where it hath enjoyed the benefit of a good soil, a strong fence, and much culture ; but being barren, these privileges secure it not from the fire. It is not our standing in the visible church by a powerless profession among real saints with whom we have been associated, and enjoyed the rich and excellent waterings of ordinances, that can secure us from the wrath of God, Matth. iii. 8, 9. “ Bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and “ think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father.” Neither Abraham, nor Abraham’s God, will acknowledge such degenerate children ; if Abraham’s faith be not in your hearts, it will be no advantage that Abraham’s blood runs in your veins. It will be a poor plea for Judas, when he shall stand before Christ in judgment, to say, Lord, I was one of thy family, I preached for thee ; I did eat and drink in thy presence. Let these scriptures be consulted, Matth. vii. 22. Matth. xxv. 11, 12. Rom. ii. 17, and 25.

2. The husbandman doth not presently cut down the tree because it puts not forth as soon as other trees do ; but waits as long as there is any hope, and then cuts it down. Thus doth God wait upon barren dead-hearted persons, from sabbath to sabbath, and from year to year ; for the Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, 2 Pet. iii. 9. Thus the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah upon those dry trees, who are now smoking and flaming in hell, 1 Pet. iii. 29. He waits long on sinners, but keeps exact accounts of every year and day of his patience, Luke xiii. 7. “ These three years.” And Jer. xxv. 3. these twenty-three years.

3. When the time is come to cut it down, the dead tree cannot possibly resist the stroke of the ax ; but receives the blow, and falls before it. No more can the stoutest sinner resist the fatal stroke by death, by which the Lord hews him down ; Eccl. viii. 8. “ There is “ no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit ; neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no discharge “ in that war.” When the pale horse comes, away you must into the land of darkness. Though thou cry with Adrian, O my poor soul ! whither art thou going ? Die thou must, thou barren professor ; though it were better for thee to do any thing else than to die. What a dreadful shriek will thy conscience give when it sees the ax at thy root, and say to thee, as it is Ezek. vii. 6. “ An end is come, the “ end is come ; it watcheth for thee ; behold it is come.” Oh ! saith Henry Beauford, (that rich and wretched cardinal, bishop of Winchester, and chancellor of England, when he perceived whereunto he must go) wherefore must I die ? If the whole realm would save

my life, I am able either by policy to get it, or by riches to buy it. Fie (quoth he) will not death be hired? Will riches do nothing? No, neither riches nor policy can then avail.

4. The side to which the tree leaned most while it stood, that way it will fall when it is cut down: and as it falls, so it lies, whether to the south or north, Eccl. xi. 3. So it fares with these mystical trees, I mean fruitless professors: Had their hearts and affections inclined and bended heaven-ward whilst they lived, that way, no doubt, they had fallen at their death; but as their hearts inclined to sin, and even bended to the world, so when God gives the fatal stroke, they must fall hell-ward and wrath-ward: And, how dreadful will such a fall be!

5. When the dead tree is carried out of the orchard, it shall never be among the living trees of the orchard any more; many years it grew among them, but now it shall never have a place there again. And when the barren professor is carried out of the world by death, he shall never be associated with the saints any more: He may then say, farewell all ye saints, among whom I lived, and with whom I so often heard, fasted, and prayed: I shall never see your face more; Matth. viii. 11, 12. "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east, and west, and north, and south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast forth into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

6. When the dead tree is carried out of the orchard, the husbandman cuts off its branches, and rives it asunder with his wedges. This also is the lot of barren professors: "The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and will cut him asunder;" he shall be dissected, or cut abroad, Luke xii. 46.

Now therefore "consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear (or rend) you in pieces," Psalm l. 22. O direful day! when the same hand that planted, pruned, and watered thee so long, and so tenderly, shall now strike mortal strokes at thee, and that without pity! "For, he that made them, will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them, will shew them no favour," Isa. xxvii. 11. For the day of mercy is over; and the day of his wrath is fully come.

7. When this tree is cleaved abroad, then its rotten, hollow inside appears, which was the cause of its barrenness; it looked like a fair and sound-bodied tree, but now all may see how rotten it is at the heart; so will God in that day, when he shall dissect the barren professor, discover the rottenness of his heart, and unsoundness of his principles and ends: Then they who never suspected him before, shall see what a hollow and rotten-hearted professor he was.

8. Lastly; The fruitless tree is cast into the fire. This also is the end and sad issue of formality, John xv. 6. "He is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire; and they are burned." This is an undoubted truth, that

there is no plant in God's vineyard, but he will have glory from it, by bearing fruit; or glory on it, by burning in the fire. In this fire shall they lie "gnashing their teeth," Luke xiii. 38. and that both in indignation against their saints, whom they shall see in glory; and against Jesus Christ, who would not save them; and against themselves, for losing so foolishly the opportunities of salvation. Do you behold, when you sit by the fire, the froth that boils out of those flaming logs? O think of that foam and rage of those undone creatures, foaming, and gnashing their teeth in that fire which is not quenched! Mark ix. 14.

REFLECTIONS.

A reflection for a formal hypocrite. How often have I passed by such barren trees, with a more barren heart, as little thinking such a tree to be the *emblem* of myself, as Nebuchadnezzar did, when he saw that tree in a dream, which represented himself, and shadowed forth to him his ensuing misery, Dan. iv. 13. But, O my conscience! my drowsy, sleepy conscience! wert thou but tender, and faithful to me, thou wouldst make as round and terrible an application of such a spectacle to me as the faithful prophet did to him, ver. 22. And thus wouldst thou, O my soul, bemoan thy condition.

Poor wretch! here I grow, for a little time, among the trees of righteousness, the plants of renown, but I am none of them; I was never planted a right seed; some green and flourishing leaves of profession, indeed, I have, which deceive others, but God cannot be deceived; he sees I am fruitless and rotten at the heart. Poor soul! what will thine end be but burning? Behold, the ax lieth by thy root? and wonder it is, that there it should lie so long, and I yet standing! Still mercy pleads for a fruitless creature: Lord, spare it one year longer. Alas! he need strike no great blow to ruin me; his very breath blows to destruction, Job iv. 9. A frown of his face can blast and ruin me, Psalm lxxx. 6. He is daily solicited by his justice to hew me down, and yet I stand. Lord, cure my barrenness! I know thou hadst rather see fruit than fire upon me.

THE POEM.

IF, after pains and patience, you can see
 No hopes of fruit, down goes the barren tree.
 You will not suffer trees that are unsound,
 And barren too, to cumber useful ground.
 The fatal ax is laid unto the root:
 'Tis fit for fire, when unfit for fruit.
 But, though this be a dead and barren tree,
 Reader, I would not have it so to thee:
 May it to thee this serious thought suggest,
 In all the orchard this dead tree's the best;

Think on it sadly, lay it close to heart,
 This is the case in which thou wast, or art.
 If so thou wast, but now dost live and grow,
 And bring forth fruit, what praise and thanks dost owe }
 To that wise husbandman that made thee so?
 O think, when justice lifted up its hand,
 How mercy did then interceding stand !
 How pity did on thy behalf appear,
 To beg reprieve for another year.
 Stop, Lord ! forbear him : all hope is not past ;
 He can but be for fire at the last.
 Though many sermons, many a gracious call
 He hath resisted like a brazen wall,
 The next may win him ; when thy grace shall raise
 Unto itself a monument of praise.
 How should this mediation thaw and melt
 The heart of him that hath such mercy felt ?
 But, if thou still remain a barren tree,
 Then here, as in a mirror, thou may'st see
 Thy wretched state, when justice, at a blow,
 Requites God's patience in thine overthrow.
 And canst thou bear it ? Can thy heart endure
 To think of everlasting burnings ? Sure,
 This must thy lot, thy fearful portion be,
 If thou continue still a barren tree.

 AN

INTRODUCTION

To the Third Part of

HUSBANDRY.

— — — — —

NOW, from the pleasant orchard let us walk
 A turn i' th' fields, and there converse and talk
 With cows and horses ; they can teach us some
 Choice lessons, though irrational and dumb.
 My reader's weary ; yet I do not fear
 To be forsaken by one reader here :
 He'll doubtless stay to hear what questions I
 Propound to beasts, and how they make reply.
 The fatted ox, and pamper'd horse you ride ;
 Their careless master for his care thus chide.

CHAP. I.

Upon the Husbandman's Care for his Cattle.

*More care for horse and oxen many take
Than for their souls, or dearest children's sake.*

OBSERVATION.

MANY husbandmen are excessively careful about their cattle, rising themselves early, or causing their servants to rise betimes to provender and dress them. Much time is spent in some countries, in trimming and adorning their horses with curious trappings and plumes of feathers; and if at any time their beasts be sick, what care is taken to recover and heal them: you will be sure they shall want nothing that is necessary for them; yea, many will chuse rather to want themselves, than suffer their horses so to do; and take a great deal of comfort to see them thrive and prosper under their hands.

APPLICATION.

WHAT one said of bloody Herod, who slew so many children at Bethlehem, That it were better to be his swine than his son, may truly enough be applied to some parents and masters, who take less care for the saving the souls of their children and servants, than they do for the bodies of those beasts which daily feed at their stalls and cribs. Many there be who do in reference to their souls, as Jacob did with respect to the preservation of their bodies, when he put all the herds of cattle before, and his wives and little ones behind, as he went to meet his brother Esau. It is a weighty saying of a grave * author; 'It is vile ingratitude to rejoice when cattle multiply, and repine when children increase; it is heathenish distrustfulness to fear that he who provides for your beasts, will not provide for your children; and it is no less than unnatural cruelty, to be careful of the bodies of beasts, and careless of the souls of children.' Let us but a little compare your care and diligence in both respects, and see, in a few particulars, whether you do indeed value your own, or your children and servants' souls, as you do the life and health of a beast.

1. Your care for your very horses is expressed early, whilst they are but colts, and not come to do you any service; you are willing to be at pains and cost, to have them broken and brought to their way. This is more than ever many of them did for their children; they can see them wild and profane, naturally taking a stroke or way of wickedness, but yet never were at any pains or cost to break them: these must be fondled and cockered up in the natural way of their own cor-

* Jenk. on Jude, part 2. p. 170.

ruption and wickedness, and not a rod of reproof used to break them off it.

It is observed of the Persians,* that they put out their children to school, as soon as they can speak, and will not see them in seven years after, lest their indulgence should do them hurt.

2. You keep your constant set times, *morning* and *evening* to feed, water, and dress your cattle, and will by no means neglect it once : but how many times have you neglected *morning* and *evening* duties in your families ? Yea, how many be there, whose very tables, in respect of any worship God hath there, do very little differ from the very cribs and mangers at which their horses feed ? As soon as you are up in a morning, you are with your beasts before you have been with your God. How little do such differ from beasts ? And happy were it, if they were no more accountable to God than their beasts are.

The end of your care, cost, and pains about your cattle is, that they may be strong for labour, and the more serviceable to you : thus you comply with the end of their beings. But how rare a thing is it to find these men as careful to fit their posterity to be useful and serviceable to God in their generations, which is the end of their beings ? If you can make them rich, and provide good matches for them, you reckon that you have fully discharged the duty of parents : if they will learn to hold the plow, that you are willing to teach them : but, when did you spend an hour to teach them the way of salvation ?

Now to convince such careless parents of the heinousness of their sin, let these queries be solemnly considered.

Qu. 1. Whether this be a sufficient discharge of that great duty which God hath laid upon Christian parents, in reference to their families ? That God hath charged them with the souls of their families, is undeniable, Deut. vi. 6, 7. Eph. vi. 4. If God hath not clothed you with his authority, to command them in the way of the Lord, he would never have charged them so strictly to yield you obedience as he hath done, Eph. vi. 1. Col. iii. 20. Well, a great trust is reposed in you, look to your duty ; for, without dispute, you shall answer for it.

Quest. 2. Whether it be likely, if the time of youth (which is the moulding age) be neglected, they will be wrought upon to any good afterwards ? Husbandmen, let me put a sensible case to you ; do you not see in your very horses, that whilst they are young, you can bring them to any way ; but if once they have got a false stroke, and by long custom it be grown natural to them, then there is no breaking them off it : you see it in your very orchards ; you may bring a tender twig to grow in what form you please ; but when it is grown to a sturdy limb, there is no bending it afterwards to any other form than what it naturally took. Thus it is with children, Prov. xxii. 6.

* Clark's Mir. p. 506.

“ Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Qu. 3. Whether if you neglect to instruct them in the way of the Lord, Satan, and their own natural corruptions, will not instruct them in the way to hell? Consider this, ye careless parents: if you will not teach your children, the devil will teach them: if you shew them not how to pray, he will shew them how to curse and swear, and take the name of the Lord in vain; if you grudge time and pains about their souls, the devil doth not. Oh! it is a sad consideration, that so many children should be put to school to the devil.

Qu. 4. What comfort are you like to have from them when they are old, if you bring them not up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord when they are young? Many parents have lived to reap in their old age the fruit of their own folly and carelessness, in the loose and vain education of their children. By Lycurgus's law, no parent was to be relieved by his children in age, if he gave them not good education in their youth; and it is a law at this day among the Switzers, That if any child be condemned to die for a capital offence, the parents of that child are to be his executioners: these laws were made to provoke parents to look better to their charge. Believe this as an undoubted truth, 'That that child which becomes through thy default, an instrument to dishonour God, shall prove, sooner or later, a son or daughter of sorrow to thee.

1. God hath found out my sin this day. This hath been my practice ever since I had a family committed to my charge; I have spent more time and pains about the bodies of my beasts, than the souls of my children: beast that I am for so doing! Little have I considered the preciousness of my own, or their immortal souls. How careful have I been to provide fodder to preserve my cattle in the winter, whilst I leave my own and their souls to perish to eternity, and make no provision for them? Surely my children will one day curse the time that ever they were born unto such a cruel father, or of such a merciless mother. Should I bring home the plague in to my family, and live to see all my poor children lie dead by the walls; if I had not the heart of a tyger, such a sight would melt my heart: and yet the death of their souls, by the sin which I propagated to them, as I have done for a beast that perisheth!

*A reflection for
careless parents.*

2. But, unhappy wretch that I am!

God cast a better lot for me; I am the off-spring of religious and tender parents, who have always deeply concerned them-

*A reflection for the dis-
obedient child of a gra-
cious parent.*

selves in the everlasting *state of my soul*: many prayers and tears have they poured out to God for me, both in my hearing, as well as in secret; many holy and wholesome counsels have they from time to time dropt upon me; many precious examples have they set in their

own practice before me ; many a time when I have sinned against the Lord, have they stood over me, with a rod in their hands, and tears in their eyes, using all means to reclaim me ; but like an ungracious wretch, I have slighted all their counsel, grieved their hearts, and embittered their lives to them by my sinful courses. Ah, my soul ! thou art a degenerate plant ; better will it be with the off-spring of infidels than with thee, if repentance prevent not : now I live in one family with them, but shortly I shall be separated from them, as far as hell is from heaven ; they now tenderly pity my misery, but then they shall approve and applaud the righteous sentence of Christ upon me : so little privilege shall I then have from my relation to them, that they shall be produced as witnesses against me, and all their rejected counsels, reproofs and examples, charged home upon me, as the aggravations of my wickedness ; and better it will be, when it shall come to that, that I had been brought forth by a beast, than sprung from the loins of such parents.

THE POEM.

YOUR cattle in fat pastures thrive and grow,
 There's nothing wanting that should make them so.
 The pamper'd horse commends his master's care,
 Who neither pains nor cost doth grudge or spare.
 But art not thou mean while the vilest fool,
 That pamper'st beasts, and starves thy precious soul ?
 'Twere well if thou couldst die as well as live
 Like beasts, and had no more account to give.
 O that these lines your folly might detect !
 Who both your own and children's souls neglect
 To care for beasts. O man ! prepare to hear
 The doleful'st language that e'er pierc'd thine ear ;
 When you your children once in hell shall meet,
 And with such language their damn'd parents greet
 " O cursed father ! wretched mother ! why
 " Was I your off-spring ? Would to God that I
 " Had sprung from tygers, who more tender be
 " Unto their young than you have been to me.
 " How did you spend your thoughts, time, care, and cost
 " About my body, whilst my soul was lost ?
 " Did you not know I had a soul, that must
 " Live, when this body was dissolv'd to dust ?
 " You could not chuse but understand if I,
 " Without an interest in Christ did die,
 " It needs must come to this. O how could you
 " Prove so remorseless, and no pity shew ?
 " O cruel parents ! I may curse the day
 " That I was born of such as did betray

“ Their child to endless torments. Now must I
 “ With, and through you, in flames for ever lie.”
 Let this make every parent tremble, lest
 He lose his child, whilst caring for his beast :
 Or lest his own poor soul do starve and pine,
 Whilst he takes thought for horses, sheep and kine.



CHAP. II.

Upon the hard Labour, and cruel Usage of Beasts.

*When under loads your beasts do groan, think then
 How great a mercy 'tis that you are men.*

OBSERVATION.

THOUGH some men be excessively careful and tender over their beasts, as was noted in the former chapter ; yet others are cruel and merciless towards them, not regarding how they ride or burden them. How often have I seen them fainting under their loads, wrought off their legs, and turned out with galled backs into the fields or high-ways to shift for a little grass ; many times have I heard and pitied them groaning under unreasonable burdens, and beaten on by merciless drivers, till at last, by such cruel usage, they have been destroyed, and then cast into a ditch for dog's meat.

APPLICATION.

SUCH sights as these should make men thankful for the mercy of their creation, and bless their bountiful Creator, that they were not made such creatures themselves. Some beasts are made *ad esum*, only for food, being no otherwise useful to men, as *swine*, &c. These are only fed for slaughter ; we kill and eat them, and regard not their cries and strugglings when the knife is thrust to their very hearts ! others are only *ad usum*, for service whilst living, but unprofitable when dead, as *horses* ; these we make to drudge and toil for us from day to day, but kill them not ; others are both *ad esum*, *et usum*, for food when dead, and service whilst alive, as the *ox* ; these we make to plow our fields, draw our carriages, and afterwards prepare them for the slaughter.

But man was made for nobler ends, created lord of the lower world ; not to serve, but to be served by other creatures, a mercy able to melt the hardest heart into thankfulness. I remember, Luther* pressing men to be thankful, that they are not brought into

* Luther in 5 Precept.

the lowest condition of creatures, and to bless God that they can see any creature below themselves, give us a famous instance in the following story: Two cardinals (saith he) riding in a great deal of pomp to the council of Constance, by the way they heard a man in the fields, weeping and wailing bitterly; they rode to him, and asked him what he ailed? Perceiving his eye intently fixed upon an ugly toad, he told them that his heart melted with the consideration of this mercy, that God had not made him such a deformed and loathsome creature, though he were formed out of the same clay with it: *Hoc est quod amare fleo*, said he, this is that which makes me weep bitterly. Whereupon one of the cardinals cried out, Well, said the father, the unlearned will rise and take heaven, when we with all our learning shall be thrust into hell. That which melted the heart of this poor man, should melt every heart when we behold the misery to which these poor creatures are subjected. And this will appear a mercy of no slight consideration, if we but draw a comparison betwixt ourselves and these irrational creatures, in these three particulars.

1. Though they and we were made of the same mould and clay, yet how much better hath God dealt with us, even as to the outward man? The structure of our bodies is much more excellent; God made other good creatures by a word of command, but man by counsel; it was not, Be thou, but, *Let us make man*. We might have been made stones without sense, or beasts without reason, but we were made men. The noble structure and symmetry of our bodies invite our souls not only to thankfulness but admiration. David, speaking of the curious frame of the body, saith, "I am wonderfully made," Psal. cxxxix. 14. or, as the vulgar reads it, painted as with a needle, like some rich piece of needle-work curiously embroidered with nerves and veins. Was any part of the common lump of clay thus fashioned? Galen gave Epicurus an hundred years time to imagine a more commodious situation, configuration, or composition of any one part of a human body: and (as one saith) if all the angels in heaven had studied to this day, they could not have cast the body of man into a more curious mould.

2. How little ease or rest have they? They live not many years, and those they do are in bondage and misery, groaning under the effects of sin; but God hath provided better for us, even as to our outward condition in the world; we have the more rest, because they have so little. How many refreshments and comforts hath God provided for us, of which they are incapable? If we be weary with labour, we can take our rest; but fresh or weary, they must stand to it, or sink under it from day to day.

3. What a narrow capacity hath God given to beasts! What a large capacity to man! Alas, they are only capable of a little sensitive pleasure; as you shall see sometimes, how they will frisk in a green pasture; this is all they are capable of, and this death puts an

end to: but how comprehensive are our souls in their capacities? We are made in the image of God; we can look beyond present things, and are capable of the highest happiness, and that to all eternity: the soul of a beast is but a material form, which, wholly depending upon, must needs die with the body; but our souls are a divine spark or blast; and when the body dies, it dies not with it, but subsists even in its separated state.

REFLECTIONS.

1. How great a sin is ingratitude to God for such a common, but choice mercy of creation and provision for me in this world? *A reflection for an unthankful sinner.* There is no creature made worse by kindness, but man. There is a kind of gratitude which I may observe, even in these brute beasts: they do in their way acknowledge their benefactors; "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib." How ready are they to serve such as feed and cherish them? But I have been both unthankful and unserviceable to my Creator and Benefactor, that hath done me good all my days; those poor creatures that sweat and groan under the load that I lay upon them, never sinned against God, nor transgressed the laws of their creation, as I have done; and yet God hath dealt better with me than with them. O that the bounty of God, and his distinguishing mercy between me and the beasts that perish, might move and melt my heart into thankfulness! O that I might consider seriously what the higher and more excellent end of my creation is, and might more endeavour to answer and live up to it! Or else, O my soul, it will be worse with thee than the beasts: it is true, they are under bondage and misery; but it is but for a little time; death will end all their pains, and ease them of all their heavy loads; but I shall groan to all eternity, under a heavier burden than ever they felt; they have no account to give, but so have I. What comfort is it, that I have a larger capacity than a beast hath? That God hath endowed me with reason, which is denied to them? Alas! this will but augment my misery, and enlarge me to take in a greater measure of anguish.

2. By how many steps, O my soul! mayest thou ascend in the praises of thy God, when thou considerest the mercies that God hath bestowed upon thee; not only in that he made thee not a stone or tree without sense, or an horse or dog without reason; but that thou art not an infidel without light, or an unregenerate person without grace? What! to have sense, and all the delights of it, which stones have not! Reason, with the more high and noble pleasures of it, which beasts have not! the light and knowledge of the great things of the gospel, which the heathens have not! and such an expectation and hope of inconceivable glory and felicity, which the un-

sanctified have not ! O my soul ! how rich, how bountiful hath thy God been to thee ! These are the overflowings of his love to thee who wast moulded out of the same lump with the *beasts* that groan on earth, yea, with the damned that howl in hell : well may I say that God hath been a good God to me !

THE POEM.

WHEN I behold a tired jade put on
 With whip and spur till all his strength be gone ;
 See streams of sweat run down his bleeding sides,
 How little mercy's shewn by him that rides.
 If I more thankful to my God would prove
 Than such a rider merciless, 'twill move
 My soul to praise : For who sees this, and can
 But bless the Lord that he was made a man.
 And such a sight the rider ought to move
 This meditation duly to improve.

What hath this creature done, that he should be
 Thus beaten, wounded, and tir'd out by me ?
 He is my fellow-creature ; 'tis mere grace
 I had not been in his, he in my case.
 Ungrateful, stupid man ! God might have made
 Me bear the saddle, as I see this jade.
 He never sinn'd, but for my sin doth lie
 Subjected unto all this misery.

Lord, make my heart relent, that I should be
 To thee more useless than my horse to me :
 He did his utmost, went as long as ever
 His legs could bear him ; but for me I never
 Thus spent my strength for God, but oft have been
 Too prodigal thereof in ways of sin.

Though he's the horse, and I the man, 'twill be
 Far better with my horse one day than me :
 Unless thy grace prevent and superadd
 A new creation unto that I had.

Could every reader fix a serious thought
 On such a subject, and hereby be taught
 To spiritualize it, and improve it thus ;
 How sweet would tedious journeys be to us !
 But such a task a graceless heart tires out,
 More than the tired horse I write about.

CHAP. III.

Upon the seeking of lost Cattle.

*When seeking your lost cattle, keep in mind,
That thus Christ Jesus seeks your souls to find.*

OBSERVATION.

WHEN cattle are strayed away from your fields, you use all care and diligence to recover them again; tracing their footsteps, crying them in the market-towns, sending your servants abroad, and enquiring yourselves of all that you think can give news of them. What care and pains men will take in such cases, was exemplified in Saul, 1 Sam. ix. 4, 5. who with his servant, passed through mount Ephraim to seek the asses that were strayed from his father, and through the land of Shalisha, and through the land of Shalim, and they were not there, and through the land of the Benjamites, but found them not.

APPLICATION.

THE care and pains you take to recover your lost cattle, carries a sweet and lively representation of the love of Jesus Christ, in the recovery of lost sinners. Jesus Christ came on purpose from heaven upon a like errand, to seek and to save that which was lost, Matth. xviii. 11. There are several particulars in which this glorious design of Christ, in seeking and saving lost man, and the care and pains of husbandmen in recovering their lost cattle, do meet and touch, though there be as many particulars also in which they differ: all which I shall open under the following heads.

1. We sometimes find that cattle will break out of those very fields where they have been bred; and where they want nothing that is needful for them. Just thus lost man departed from his God, brake out of that pleasant enclosure where he was abundantly provided for, both as to soul and body; yet then he brake over the hedge of the command, and went astray, Eccles. vii. 29. "Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright, but he sought out to himself many inventions:" He was not content and satisfied with that blessed state God had put him into, but would be trying new conclusions, to the loss and ruin both of himself and his posterity.

2. Strayers are evermore sufferers for it; all they get by it is to be pined and pointed: and what did man get by departing from his God, but ruin and misery to soul and body? Will you have an ab-breviate of his sufferings and losses? The full account none can give you: Why, by straying from his God, he lost the rectitude and holiness of his nature; like a true strayer, he is all dirty and miry, over-spread and besmeared both in soul and body with the odious filthiness

of sin; he lost the liberty and freedom of his will to good, a precious jewel of inestimable value. This is a real misery incurred by the fall, though some have so far lost their understandings and humility, as not to own it; he hath lost his God, his soul, his happiness, and his very bowels of compassion towards himself in this miserable state.

3. When your cattle are strayed, yea, though it be but one of the flock or herd, you leave all the rest, and go after that which is lost: So did *Jesus Christ*, who, in the forecited place, Matth. xviii. 12. compares himself to such a shepherd; he left heaven itself, and all the blessed *angels* there, to come into this world to seek lost man. O the precious esteem, and dear love that Christ had to poor man! How did his bowels yearn towards us in our low state! How did he pity us in our misery! As if he had said, poor creatures, they have lost themselves, and are become a prey to the devil in a perishing state; I will seek after them, and save them. The son of man is come to seek and to save.

4. You are glad when you have found your strayers, much more is Christ when he hath found a lost soul. O it is a great satisfaction to him to see the fruit of the travail of his soul, Isa. liii. “Yea, there “is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over “ninety-nine just persons that need no repentance.” What demonstrations of joy and gladness did the father of the prodigal give, when he had found his son that was lost? Luke xv. 20.

5. When you have brought home your strayers, you sometimes clog them to prevent their wandering again, and stop up the gaps with thorns; and so doth God oftentimes by such souls as are recovered and brought home to Christ; he hangs a clog of affliction to prevent their departure from God again, 2 Cor. xii. 7.

But then there are five particulars in which Christ’s seeking lost souls, and your seeking lost cattle differ.

1. Your cattle sometimes find the way home themselves, and return to you of their own accord; but lost man never did, nor can do so; he was his own destroyer, but can never be his own saviour; it was possible for him not to have lost his God, but having once lost him, can never find him again of himself. Alas! his heart is bent to backsliding, he hath no will to return. Hear how Christ complains, John v. 40. “Ye will not come unto me.” Man’s recovery begins in God, not in himself.

2. Your servants can find, and bring back your lost cattle as well as you; but so cannot Christ’s servants: Ministers may discover, but cannot recover them: they daily see, but cannot save them; lament them they can, but help them they cannot; intreat and beg them to return they can, and do, but prevail with them they cannot. Melancthon thought, when he began to preach, to persuade all; but old Adam was too hard for young Melancthon.

3. You seek all the cattle that are strayed from you, especially the best; but Jesus Christ only seeks poor lost man. There were other

creatures, and such as by nature were more excellent, that lost their God and themselves: I mean, the apostate angels; but he came not to seek them: herein his singular love to man appears.

4. When you have recovered and brought home your lost cattle, you may lose them the second time, and never recover them again; but so cannot Christ. Man once recovered is for ever secured by him. "All that thou hast given me, I have kept, and not one of them is lost but the son of perdition;" and he was never savingly found, John xvii. 12.

5. Though you prize your cattle, yet you will not venture your life for the recovery of them; rather let them go than regain them with such an hazard; but Jesus Christ not only ventured, but actually laid down his life to recover and save lost man: he redeemed them at the price of his own blood; he is that good shepherd that laid down his life for the sheep. O the surpassing love of Christ to lost souls!

REFLECTIONS.

1. Lord, I am a lost creature! an undone soul! and herein lies my misery, that I have not only lost my God, but have no heart to return to him: nay, I fly from Christ, who is come on purpose from heaven to seek and to save me: his messengers are abroad, seeking for such as I am, but I avoid them, or at least refuse to obey their call and persuasions to return. Ah, what a miserable state am I in! Every step I go is a step towards hell; my soul, with the prodigal, is ready to perish in a strange country: but I have no mind, with him, to return home. Wretched soul! what will the end of this be? If God have lost thee: the devil hath found thee; he takes up all strayers from God: yea, death and hell will shortly find thee, if Christ do not; and then thy recovery, O my soul! will be impossible! Why sit I here perishing and dying? I am not yet as irrecoverably lost as the damned are. O let me delay no longer, lest I be lost for ever!

2. O my soul! for ever bless and admire the love of Jesus Christ, who came from heaven to seek and save such a lost soul as I was. Lord, how marvellous! how matchless is thy love! I was lost, and am found: I am found, and did not seek; nay, I am found by him from whom I fled. Thy love, O my Saviour! was a preventing love, a wonderful love; thou lovedst me much more than I loved myself; I was cruel to my own soul, but thou wast kind; thou soughtest for me a lost sinner, and not for lost angels; thy hand of grace caught hold of me, and hath let go thousands, and ten thousands, as good as myself by nature: like another David, thou didst rescue my poor lost soul out of the mouth of the destroyer; yea, more than so, thou didst lose thine own life to find mine: and now, dear Jesus, since I am thus marvellously recovered,

shall I ever straggle again from thee? O let it for ever be a warning to me, how I turn aside into the by-paths of sin any more.

THE POEM.

WHEN cattle from your fields are gone astray,
 And you to seek them through the country ride;
 Enquiring for them all along the way,
 Tracking their footsteps where they turn'd aside;
 One servant this way sent, another that,
 Searching the fields and country round about;
 This meditation now falls in so pat,
 As if God sent it to enquire you out:
 My beasts are lost, and so am I by sin;
 My wretched soul from God thus wand'ring went;
 As I seek them, so was I sought by him,
 Who from the Father's bosom forth was sent.
 Pursu'd by sermons, follow'd close by grace,
 And strong convictions, Christ hath sought for me;
 Yea, though I shun him, still he gives me chase,
 As if resolv'd I should not damned be.
 When angels lost themselves, it was not so;
 God did not seek, or once for them enquire;
 But said, Let these apostate creatures go,
 I'll plague them for it with eternal fire.
 Lord! what am I, that thou should'st set thine eyes,
 And still seek after such a wretch as I?
 Whose matchless mercy, and rich grace despise,
 As if, in spite thereof, resolv'd to die.
 Why should I shun thee? Blessed Saviour, why
 Should I avoid thee thus? Thou dost not chase
 My soul to slay it; O that ever I
 Should fly a Saviour that's so full of grace!
 Long hast thou sought me, Lord, I now return,
 O let thy bowels of compassion sound;
 For my departure I sincerely mourn,
 And let this day thy wand'ring sheep be found.

CHAP. IV.

Upon the Feeding of fat Cattle.

*Fat beasts you kill, the lean you use to save:
 God's dispensations some such meaning have.*

OBSERVATION.

IT is a good observation of a Father, and well applied; *Vituli triturantes quotidie ligantur, vituli mactandi quotidie in pascuis libere re-*

inquantur: Oxen for use are daily yoked and kept short, whilst those that are designed for the shambles, are let loose in green pastures to feed at pleasure. Store beasts fare hard, and are kept lean and low; feeding beasts are excused from the yoke, whilst others are laboured and wrought hard every day; the one hath more than he can eat, the other would eat more if he had it.

APPLICATION.

THUS deals the Lord oft-times with his own elect, whom he designs for glory; and with the wicked, who are preparing for the day of wrath: thus are they filled with earthly prosperity and creature-enjoyments, like lusty and wanton beasts turned out at liberty in a fat pasture, whilst poor saints are kept hard and short; Amos iv. 1. "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountains of Samaria, which oppress the poor, crush the needy." These metaphorical kine are the prosperous oppressors of the world, full fed, and wanton, wicked men. It is true, heaven hath not all the poor, nor hell all the rich; but it is a very common dispensation of providence to bestow most of the things of this world upon them that have no portion in heaven; and to keep them short on earth, for whom that kingdom is provided. Let me draw forth the similitude in a few particulars.

1. The beasts of slaughter have the fattest pastures; so have the ungodly in the world; "Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish," Psal. lxxiii. 7. Their hearts are as fat as grease, Psal. cxix. 70. These be they that fleet off the cream of earthly enjoyments, "whose bellies are filled with hidden treasures," Psal. xvii. 14. "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked," Job ix. 24. O what full estates! what an affluence of earthly delights hath God cast in upon some wicked men! There is much wantonness, but no want in their dwellings: some that know not which way to turn themselves in hell, once knew not where to bestow their goods on earth.

2. Feeding beasts grow wanton in their full pastures; there you shall see them tumble and frisk, and kick up their heels. The same effect hath the prosperity of the wicked; it makes them wanton; their life is but a diversion from one pleasure to another, Job xxi. 11, 12, 13. "They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance: they take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ: they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave." The same character doth the prophet Amos give of them, Amos vi. 4, 5, 6. "They stretch themselves upon beds of ivory, drink wine in bowls," &c. and no sorrow goes to their hearts. These are they that live in pleasures upon earth, as a fish in the water, Jam. v. 5.

3. These fat pastures do but the sooner hasten the death of these

cattle: the sooner they are fatted, the sooner they are slaughtered; and the prosperity of the wicked serves to the same end: the prosperity of fools shall destroy them; i. e. it shall be the means and instrument of heating and heightening their lusts, and thereby fitting them for destruction; their prosperity is food and fuel to their corruptions. Many wicked men had not been so soon ripe for hell, had they not grown in the sunshine of prosperity.

4. Fatted beasts do not in the least understand the intent and meaning of the husbandman, in allowing them such large and fat pastures, which he denies to his other cattle; and as little as beasts do wicked men understand the scope and end of God's providences, in casting prosperity and wealth upon them; little do they think their tables are a snare, a gin, and a trap for their souls; they only, like beasts, mind what is before them, but do not at all understand the tendency and end of these their sensual delights.

5. Though the husbandman keeps his store-cattle in short commons, yet he intends to preserve them: these shall remain with him, when the others are driven to the slaughter.

Such a design of preservation is carried on in all those outward straits, wants, and hardships which the Lord exposes his people to. I confess, such dispensations, for the present, are very stumbling and puzzling things, even to gracious and wise persons. To see wicked men, not only exempted from their troubles, but even oppressed with prosperity: to see a godly man in wants and straits, and a wicked man have more than his heart can wish, is a case that poses the wisest Christian, till he considers the designs and issues of both those providences, and then he acquiesces in the wisdom of God so ordering it, Psal. lxxiii. 5, 14, 18, 23.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Doth my prosperity fat me up for hell, and prepare me for the day of slaughter? Little cause have I then to glory in it, and lift up my heart upon these things. Indeed, God hath given (I cannot say *voluptuous worldling*. blessed me with) a fulness of creature-enjoyments; upon these my carnal heart seizeth greedily and securely, not at all suspecting a snare lying in these things for the ruin of my soul. What are all these charming pleasures, but so many rattles to quiet my soul, whilst its damnation steals insensibly upon it? What are all my businesses and employments in the world, but so many diversions from the business of life? There are but two differences betwixt me and the poorest slave the devil hath on earth; such are whipped on to hell by outward miseries, and I am coached to hell in a little more pomp and honour; these will have a less, and I a greater account in the day of reckoning. O that I had never known prosperity! I am now tumbling in a green pasture, and shortly shall be hanging up in the shambles of hell: if this be the best fruit of my

prosperity, if I were taken captive by cruel cannibals, and fed with the richest fare, but withal understood, that the design of it were to fat me up like a beast for them to feed upon, how little stomach should I have to their dainties! O my soul! it were much better for thee to have a sanctified poverty, which is the portion of many saints, than an ensnaring prosperity, set as a trap to ruin thee for ever.

2. The wisdom of my God hath allotted me but short commons here; his providence feeds me, but from hand to mouth; but I am, and well may be, contented with my present state; that which sweetens it is, that I am one of the Lord's preserved. *A reflection for a poor Christian.* How much better is a morsel of bread and a draught of water here, with an expectancy of glory hereafter, than a fat pasture given in, and a fitting for the wrath to come? Well, since the case stands thus, blessed be God for my present lot! Though I have but a little in hand, I have much in hope; my present troubles will serve to sweeten my future joys; and the sorrows of this life will give a lustre to the glory of the next: that which is now hard to suffer, will then be sweet to remember; my songs will then be louder than my groans now are.

THE POEM.

THOSE beasts which for the shambles are design'd,
In fragrant flow'ry meadows you shall find,
Where they abound with rich and plenteous fare,
Whilst others graze in commons thin and bare:
Those live a short and pleasant life, but these
Protract their lives in dry and shorter leas.
Thus live the wicked; thus they do abound
With earthly glory, and with honour crown'd.
Their lofty heads unto the stars aspire,
And radiant beams their shining brows attire.
The fattest portion's serv'd up in their dish;
Yea, they have more than their own hearts can wish.
Dissolv'd in pleasures, crowned with buds of May;
They, for a time, in these fat pastures play,
Frisk, dance and leap, like full-fed beasts; and even
Turn up their wanton heels against the heaven;
Not understanding that this pleasant life,
Serves but to fit them for the butcher's knife.
In fragrant meads they tumbling are to-day,
To-morrow to the slaughter led away.
Their pleasure's gone, and vanish like a bubble,
Which makes their future torments on them double.
Meanwhile God's little flock is poor and lean,
Because the Lord did ne'er intend or mean
This for their portion; and besides doth know
Their souls prove best, where shortest grass doth grow.

Cheer up, poor flock, although your fare be thin,
 Yet here is something to take comfort in:
 You here securely feed, and need not fear,
 Th' infernal butcher can't approach you here.
 'Tis somewhat that; but, oh! which far transcends,
 Your glorious shepherd's coming, who intends
 To lead you hence unto that fragrant hill,
 Where, with green pastures, he his flocks will fill;
 Or which he from celestial casements pours
 The sweetest dews, and constant gracious show'rs;
 Along whose banks rivers of pleasures glide,
 There his bless'd flocks for ever shall abide,
 O envy not the worldlings present joys.
 Which to your future mercies are but toys,
 Their pasture now is green, your's dry and burn'd,
 But then the scene is chang'd, the tables turn'd.

CHAP. V.

Upon the Husbandman's Care for Posterity.

*Good husbands labour for posterity;
 To after-ages saints must have an eye.*

OBSERVATION.

PROVIDENT and careful husbandmen do not only labour to supply their own necessities, while living, but lay up something for their posterity when they are gone: they do not only leave to their children what their progenitors left them, but they desire to leave it improved and bettered. None but bad husbands and spend-thrifts are of the mind with that heathen emperor Tiberius, who having put all into such confusions in the empire, that it might be thought the world would end with him; yet pleased himself with this apprehension, That he should be out of the reach of it; and would often say, When I am dead, let heaven and earth mingle; if the world will but hold my time, let it break when I am gone. But provident men look beyond their own time, and do very much concern themselves in the good or evil of their posterity.

APPLICATION.

WHAT careful husbands do, with respect to the provisions they make for their children, that all prudent Christians are bound to do, with respect to the truths committed to them, and by them to be transmitted to succeeding saints.

In the first ages of the world, even till the law was given, faithful men were instead of books and records; they did, by oral tradition,

convey the truths of God to posterity : but since the sacred truth hath been consigned to writing, no such tradition (except fully consentient with that written word) is to be received as authentic ; but the truths therein delivered to the saints, are, by verbal *declarations*, open *confessions*, and constant *sufferings*, to be preserved and delivered from age to age. This was the constant care of the whole cloud of witnesses, both ancient and modern, who have kept the word of God's patience, and would not accept their own lives, liberties, or estates, no, nor the whole world in exchange for that invaluable treasure of truth : they have carefully practised Solomon's counsel, Prov. xxiii. 23. "Buy the truth, but sell it not;" they would not alienate that fair inheritance for all the inheritances on earth. Upon the same reasons that you refuse to part with, or imbezzle your estates, Christians also refuse to part with the truth of God.

1. You will not waste or alienate your inheritance, because it is precious, and of great value in your eyes ; but much more precious are God's truths to his people. Luther professed, he would not take the whole *world* for one leaf of his Bible. Though some profane persons may say with Pilate, What is truth ? Yet know, that any one truth of the gospel is more worth than all the inheritances upon earth ; they are the great things of God's law ; and he that sells them for the greatest things in this world, makes a soul-undoing bargain.

2. You will not waste or part with your inheritance, because you know your posterity will be much wronged by it. They that daffle or drink away an estate, drink the tears of their sad widows, and the very blood of their impoverished children. The people of God do also consider, how much the generations to come are concerned in the conservation of the truths of God for them : It cuts them to the heart, but to think that their children should be brought up to worship dumb idols, and fall down before a wooden and breadden God. The very birds and beasts will expose their own bodies to apparent danger of death to preserve their young. Religion doth much more tender the hearts and bowels than nature doth.

3. You reckon it a foul disgrace to sell your estates, and become bankrupts ; it is a word that bears ill among you : and a Christian accounts it the highest reproach in the world, to be a *traitor* to, or an apostate from the truths of God. When the primitive saints were strictly required to deliver up their Bibles, those that did so, were justly branded, and hissed out of their company, under the odious title of *traditores*, or deliverers.

4. You are so loth to part with your estates, because you know it is hard recovering an estate again when once you have lost it. Christians do also know how difficult it will be for the people of God, in times to come, to recover the light of the gospel again, if once it be extinguished. There is no truth of God recovered out of Antichrist's hands, without great wrestlings and much blood. The church may call every point of reformed doctrine and discipline so

recovered, her Naphthalies; for with great wrestlings she hath wrestled for them; “earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to “them,” Jude 3.

5. To conclude; rather than you will part with your estates, you will choose to suffer many wants and hardships all your lives; you will fare hard, and go bare, to preserve what you have for your posterity: but the people of God have put themselves upon far greater hardships than these to preserve truth? they have chosen to suffer reproaches, poverty, prisons, death, and the most cruel torments, rather than the loss of God’s truth, all the martyrologies will inform you what their sufferings have been, to keep the word of God’s patience; they have boldly told their enemies, that they might pluck their hearts out of their bodies, but should never pluck the truth out of their hearts.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Base unbelieving heart! How have I flinched and sunk from truth, when it hath been in danger? I have rather chosen to leave it than my life, liberty, or estate, as a prey to the enemy. I have left truth, and just it is that the God of truth should leave me. Cowardly soul! that durst not make a stand for the truth: yea, rather bold and daring soul! that would rather venture to look a wrathful God, than an angry man in the face. I would not own and preserve the truth, and the God of truth will not own me; 2 Tim. ii. 12. “If we deny him, he will deny us.”

2. Lord! unto me hast thou committed the precious treasure and trust of truth; and as I received it, so do I desire to deliver it to the generations to come, that the people which are yet unborn may praise the Lord. God forbid I should ever part with such a fair inheritance, and thereby beggar my own, and thousands of souls! Thou hast given me thy truth, and the world hates me; I well know that it is the ground of the quarrel. Would I but throw truth over the walls, how soon would a retreat be sounded to all persecutors? But, Lord, thy truth is invaluablely precious. What a vile thing is my blood, compared with the least of all thy truths? Thou hast charged me not to sell it; and, in thy strength, I resolve never to pass a fine, and cut off that golden line whereby thy truths are entailed upon thy people from generation to generation: my friends may go, my liberty may go, my blood may go; but as for thee, precious truth, thou shalt never go.

3. How dear hath this inheritance of truth cost some Christians? How little hath it cost us? We are entered into their labours; we reap in peace what they sowed in tears, yea, in blood. O the grievous sufferings that they chose to endure! Rather than to deprive us of such an inheritance, those noble

souls, heated with the love of Christ, and care for our souls, made many bold and brave adventures for it; and yet at what a low rate do we value what cost them so dear? Like young heirs that never knew the getting of an estate, we spend it freely. Lord, help us thankfully and diligently to improve thy truths, while we are in quiet possession of them. Such intervals of peace and rest are usually of no long continuance with thy people.

THE POEM.

A PUBLIC spirit scorns to plant no root
 But such from which himself may gather fruit.
 For thus he reasons, If I reap the gains
 Of laborious predecessors pains,
 How equal is it, that posterity
 Should reap the fruits of present industry?
 Should every age but serve its turn, and take
 No thought for future times, it soon will make
 A bankrupt world, and so entail a curse
 From age to age, as it grows worse and worse.
 Our Christian predecessors careful thus
 Have been to leave an heritage to us.
 Christ's precious truth conserved in their blood,
 For no less price those truths our fathers stood.
 They have transmitted, would not alienate
 From us, their children, such a fair estate.
 We eat what they did set: and shall truth fail
 In our days? Shall we cut off th' entail,
 Or end the line of honour? Nay, what's worse,
 Give future ages cause to hate, and curse
 Our memories? Like Naboth, may this age
 Part with their blood sooner than heritage.
 Let pity move us, let us think upon
 Our children's souls, when we are dead and gone:
 Shall they, poor souls, in darkness grope, when we
 Put out the light, by which they else might see
 The way to glory? Yea, what's worse, shall it
 Be said in time to come, Christ did commit
 A precious treasure, purchased by his blood,
 To us, for ours, and for our children's good!
 But we, like cowards, false, perfidious men,
 For carnal ease, lost it, ourselves, and them.
 O let us leave, to after ages, more
 Than we receiv'd from all that went before!
 That those to come may bless the Lord, and keep
 Our names alive, when we in dust shall sleep.

CHAP. VI.

Upon the Husbandman's care to prove and preserve his Deeds.

*Deeds for our lands you prove, and keep with care ;
O that for heaven you but as careful were !*

OBSERVATION.

WE generally find men are not more careful in trying gold, or in keeping it, than they are in examining their deeds, and preserving them ; these are virtually their whole estate, and therefore it concerns them to be careful of them : if they suspect a flaw in their lease or deed, they repair to the ablest council, submit it to his judgment, make the worst of their cause, and query about all the supposable danger with him. If he tell them their case is suspicious and hazardous, how much are they perplexed and troubled ? They can neither eat, drink, nor sleep in peace, till they have a good settlement ; and willing they are to be at much cost and pains to obtain it.

APPLICATION.

THESE cares and fears with which you are perplexed in such cases, may give you a little glimpse of those troubles of soul, with which the people of God are perplexed about their eternal condition ; which, perhaps you have been hitherto unacquainted with, and therefore slighted them, as fancies and whimsies : I say, your own fears and troubles, if ever you were engaged by a cunning and powerful adversary in a law-suit for your estate, may give you a little glimpse of spiritual troubles ; and indeed it is no more but a glimpse of them : for, as the loss of an earthly, though fair inheritance, is but a trifle to the loss of God and the soul to eternity ; so you cannot but imagine, that the cares, fears, and solitudes of souls about these things, are much, very much, beyond yours. Let us compare the cases, and see how they answer to each other.

1. You have evidences for your estate, and by them you hold what you have in the world : They also have evidences for their estate in Christ, and glory to come ; they hold all *in capite*, by virtue of their intermarriage with Jesus Christ ; they come to be instated in that glorious inheritance contained in the covenant of grace. You have their tenure in that scripture, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. "All is yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Faith unites them to him, and after they believe, they are sealed by the Spirit of promise, Eph. i. 13. They can lay claim to no promise upon any other ground ; this is their title to all that they own as theirs.

2. It often falls out, that after the sealing and executing of your deeds, or leases, an adversary finds some dubious clause in them, and thereupon commences a suit at law with you. Thus it frequently

falls out with the people of God, who after their believing and sealing time, have doubts and scruples raised in them about their title. Nothing is more common, than for the devil, and their own unbelief, to start controversies, and raise strong objections against their interest in Christ, and the covenant of promises. These are cunning and potent adversaries, and do maintain long debates with the gracious soul, and reason so cunningly and sophistically with it, that it can by no means extricate and satisfy itself; always alleging, that their title is worth nothing, which they, poor souls, are but too apt to suspect.

3. All the while that a suit of law is depending about your title, you have but little comfort or benefit from your estate; you cannot look upon it as your own, nor lay out monies in building or dressing for fear you should lose all at last. Just thus stands the case with doubting Christians; they have little comfort from the most comfortable promises, little benefit from the sweetest duties and ordinances: They put off their own comforts, and say, if we were sure that all this were ours, we would then rejoice in them. But, alas! our title is dubious: Christ is a precious Christ; the promises are comfortable things; but what, if they be none of ours? Ah! how little doth the doubting Christian make of his large and rich inheritance?

4. You dare not trust your own judgments in such cases, but state your case to such as are learned in the laws, and are willing to get the ablest counsel you can to advise you. So are poor doubting Christians; they carry their cases from Christian to Christian, and from minister to minister, with such requests as these: Pray tell me, what do you think of my condition? Deal plainly and faithfully with me; these be my grounds of doubting, and these my grounds of hope. O hide nothing from me! And if they all agree that the case is good, yet they cannot be satisfied till God say so too, and confirm the word of his servants; and therefore they carry the case often before him in such words as those, Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me."

5. You have little quiet in your spirits, till the case be resolved; your meat and drink doth you little good; you cannot sleep in the night, because these troubled thoughts are ever returning upon you; what if I should be turned out of all at last? So it is with gracious souls; their eyes are held waking in the night, by reason of the troubles of their hearts, Psalm lxxvii. 4. Such fears as these are frequently returning upon their hearts, what if I should be found a self-deceiver at last? What if I but hug a phantasm instead of Christ? How can this, or that, consist with grace? Their meat and drink doth them little good; their bodies are often macerated by the troubles of their souls.

6. You will not make the best of your condition, when you state your case to a faithful counsellor; neither will they, but oftentimes

(poor pensive souls) they make it much worse than indeed it is : charge themselves with that which God never charged them with ; though this be neither their wisdom, nor their duty ; but the fears of miscarrying make them suspect fraud in all they do or have.

7. Lastly, When your title is cleared, your hearts are eased ; yea, not only eased, but overjoyed ; though not in that degree, nor with the same kind of joy with which the hearts of Christians are overflowed, when the Lord speaks peace to their souls. O welcome the sweet morning light, after a tedious night of darkness ! now they can eat their bread with comfort, and drink their wine, yea, if it be but water, with a merry heart, Eccles. ix. 7.

REFLECTIONS.

The careless soul's reflection.

1. O how hath my spirit been tossed and hurried, when I have met with troubles and clamours about my estate ! But as for spiritual troubles, and those soul-perplexing cases, that Christians speak of, I understand but little of them. I never called my everlasting state in question, nor broke an hour's sleep upon any such account. Ah, my supine and careless soul ! little hast thou regarded how matters stand in reference to eternity ! I have strongly conceited, but never thoroughly examined the validity of my title to Christ, and his promises ; nor am I able to tell, if my own conscience should demand, whereupon my claim is grounded.

O my soul ! why art thou so unwilling to examine how matters stand betwixt God and thee ? Art thou afraid to look into thy condition, lest by finding thine hypocrisy, thou shouldst lose thy peace, or rather, thy security ? To what purpose will it be to shut thine eyes against the light of conviction, unless thou couldst also find out a way to prevent thy condemnation ? Thou seest other souls, how attentively they wait under the word, for any thing that may speak to their condition. Doubtless thou hast heard, how frequently and seriously they have stated their condition, and opened their cases to the ministers of Christ. But thou, O my soul ! hast no such cases to put, no doubts to be resolved ; thou wilt leave all to the decision of the great day, and not trouble thyself about it now. Well, God will decide it ; but little to thy comfort.

The doubting soul's reflection.

2. I have heard how some have been perplexed by litigious adversaries ; but I believe none have been so tost with fears, and distracted with doubts, as I have been about the state of my soul. Lord, what shall I do ? I have often carried my doubts and scruples to thine ordinances, waiting for satisfaction to be spoken there. I have carried them to those I have judged skilful and faithful, begging their resolution and help, but nothing will stick. Still my fears are daily renewed. O my God, do thou decide my case ! tell me how the state stands betwixt thee and me ; my days consume in trouble, I can neither do nor

enjoy any good, whilst things are thus with me ; all my earthly enjoyments are dry and uncomfortable things ; yea, which is much worse, all my duties and thine ordinances, prove so too, by reason of the troubles of my heart : I am no ornament to my profession ; nay, I am a discouragement and stumbling-block to others. “ I will hearken and hear what God the Lord will speak : ” O that it might be peace ! If thou do not speak it, none can ; and when thou dost, keep thy servant from returning again to folly, lest I make fresh work for an accusing conscience, and give new matter to the adversary of my soul.

3. But thou, my soul, enjoyest a double mercy from *The assured* thy bountiful God, who hath not only given thee a *Christian's* sound title, but also the clear evidence and knowledge *reflection*. thereof. I am gathering, and daily feeding upon the full-ripe fruits of assurance, which grow upon the top boughs of faith ; whilst many of my poor brethren drink their own tears, and have their teeth broken with gravel stones. Lord, thou hast set my soul upon her high-places ; but let me not exalt myself, because thou hast exalted me, nor grow wanton, because I walk at liberty ; lest for the abuse of such precious liberty, thou clap my old chains upon me, and shut up my soul again in prison.

THE POEM.

MEN can't be quiet till they be assur'd
That their estate is good, and well secur'd.
To able counsel they their deeds submit,
Intreating them with care t' examine it :
Fearing some clause an enemy may wrest,
Or find a flaw ; whereby he may divest
Them and their children. O who can but see
How wise men in their generation be !
But do they equal cares and fears express
About their everlasting happiness ?
In spiritual things 'twould grieve one's heart to see
What careless fools these careful men can be.
'They act like men of common sense bereaven ;
Secure their lands, and they'll trust God for heaven.
How many cases have you to submit
To lawyers' judgments ? Ministers may sit
From week to week, and yet not see the face
Of one that brings a soul-concerning case.
Yea, which is worse, how seldom do you cry
To God for counsel ? Or beg him to try
Your hearts, and strictest inquisition make
Into your estate, discover your mistake ?
O stupid souls ! clouded with ignorance,
Is Christ and heaven no fair inheritance,

Compar'd with yours ? Or is eternity
 A shorter term than yours, that you should ply
 The one so close, and totally neglect
 The other, as not worth your least respect.
 Perhaps the devil, whose plot from you's conceal'd,
 Persuades your title's good, and firmly seal'd
 By God's own Spirit ; though you never found,
 One act of saving grace to lay a ground
 For that persuasion. Soul, he hath thee fast,
 Tho' he'll not let thee know it till the last.
 Lord, waken sinners, make them understand,
 'Twixt thee and them, how rawly matters stand :
 Give them no quiet rest until they see
 Their souls secur'd better than lands can be.

Occasional MEDITATIONS upon Birds, Beasts, Trees,
 Flowers, Rivers, and other Objects.

MEDITATIONS ON BIRDS.

MEDITATION I.

Upon the singing of a Nightingale.

WHO that hears such various, ravishing, and exquisite melody, would imagine the bird that makes it, to be of so small and contemptible a body and feather ? Her charming voice engaged not only mine attentive ear, but my feet also to make a nearer approach to that shady bush in which that excellent musician sat veiled ; and the nearer I came, the sweeter the melody still seemed to be ; but when I had descried the bird herself, and found her to be little bigger, and no better feathered than a sparrow, it gave my thoughts the occasion of this following application.

This bird seems to me the lively emblem of the formal hypocrite ; (1.) In that she is more in sound than substance, a loud and excellent voice, but a little despicable body ; and it recalled to my thoughts the story of Plutarch, who hearing a nightingale, desired to have one killed to feed upon, not questioning but she would please the palate as well as the ear : but when the nightingale was brought him, and he saw what a poor little creature it was, Truly, said he, thou art *vox et præterea nihil*,—a mere voice, and nothing else ; so is the hypocrite : did a man hear him sometimes in more public duties and discourses, O, thinks he, what an excellent man is this ! what a choice and rare spirit is he of ! but follow him home, observe him in his private conversation and retirements, and then you will judge Plutarch's note as applicable to him as the nightingale. (2.) This bird is observed to

charm most sweetly, and set her spirits all on work, when she perceives she hath engaged attention; so doth the hypocrite, who lives and feeds upon the applause and commendation of his admirers, and cares little for any of those duties which bring in no returns of praise from men: he is little pleased with a silent melody and private pleasure betwixt God and his own soul.

Scire tuum nihil est nisi te scire hoc sciat alter.

Alas! his knowledge is not worth a pin,
If he proclaims not what he hath within.

He is more for the theatre than the closet; and of such Christ saith, "Verily they have their reward." (3.) Naturalists observe the nightingale to be an ambitious bird that cannot endure to be outvied by any: she will rather chuse to die than be excelled; a notable instance whereof we have in the following pleasant poem, translated out of Starda, concerning the nightingale and a lutanist.

Now the declining sun did downward bend
From higher heavens, and from his looks did send
A milder flame, when near to Tyber's flow,
A lutanist allay'd his careful woe
With sounding charms; and in a greeny seat
Of shady oak, took shelter from the heat;
A nightingale o'erheard him, that did use
To sojourn in the neighbour groves, the muse
That fill'd the place, the syren of the wood
(Poor harmless syren!) stealing near, she stood
Close lurking in the leaves attentively
Recording that unwonted melody:
She conn'd it to herself; and ev'ry strain
His fingers play'd her throat return'd again.
The lutanist perceiv'd an answer sent
From th' imitating bird, and was content
To shew her play more fully: then in haste
He tries his lute, and giving her a taste
Of the ensuing quarrel, nimbly beats
On all his strings: as nimbly she repeats;
And wildly raging o'er a thousand keys,
Sounds a shrill warning of her after-lays:
With rolling hand the lutanist then plies
The trembling threads, sometimes in scornful wise
He brushes down the strings, and strikes them all
With one even stroke, then takes them several,
And culls them o'er again; his sparkling joints
With busy discant mincing on the points,
Reach back again with nimble touch, then says:
The bird replies, and art with art repays.

Sometimes as one unexpert, and in doubt,
How she might weild her voice, she draweth out
Her tone at large, and doth at first prepare
A solemn strain, nor wear'd with winding air,
But with an equal pitch, and constant throat,
Makes clear the passage for her gliding note ;
Then cross division diversly she plays,
And loudly chanting out her quickest lays,
Poises the sound, and, with a quivering voice,
Falls back again. He wondering how so choice,
So various harmony could issue out
From such a little throat, doth go about
Some harder lessons, and with wond'rous art,
Changing the strings, doth up the treble dart,
And downward smite the base, with painful stroke
He beats ; and as the trumpet doth provoke
Sluggards to fight, ev'n so his wanton skill
With mingled discord joins the hoarse and shrill.
The bird this also tunes : and whilst she cuts
Sharp notes with melting voice, and mingled puts
Measures of middle sound, then suddenly
She thunders deep, and jugs it inwardly
With gentle murmur, clear and dull she sings
By course, as when the martial warning rings.
Believ't the minstrel blusht, with angry mood :
Inflam'd (quoth he) thou chantress of the wood,
Either from thee I'll bear the prize away,
Or vanquish'd break my lute without delay.
Inimitable accents then he strains,
His hands flies on the strings ; in one he chains
Far different numbers, chasing here and there,
And all the strings he labours every where ?
Both flat and sharp he strikes, and stately grows
To prouder strains, and backward as he goes
Doubly divides, and closing up his lays
Like a full choir, a shiv'ring consort plays :
Then pausing, stood in expectation
Of his co-rival, nor durst answer on.
But she, when practice long her throat had whet,
Enduring not to yield, at once doth set
Her spirits all to work, and all in vain ;
For whilst she labours to express again,
With nature's simple voice, such divers keys,
With slender pipes such lofty notes as these.
O'ermatch'd with high designs, ov'ermatch'd with woe ;
Just at the last encounter of her foe,

She faints, she dies, falls on his instrument
That conquer'd her! a fitting monument,
How far ev'n little souls are driven on,
Struck with a virtuous emulation.

And even as far are hypocrites driven on by their ambition and pride, which is the spur that provokes them in their religious duties.

MEDITATION II.

Upon the Sight of many small Birds chirping about a dead Hawk.

HEARING a whole choir of birds chirping and twinkling together, it engaged *my* curiosity a little to enquire into the occasion of that convocation, which mine eye quickly informed me of; for I perceived a dead hawk in the bush, about which they made such a noise, seeming to triumph at the death of their enemy; and I could not blame them to sing his knell, who, like a Cannibal, was wont to feed upon their living bodies, tearing them limb from limb, and scaring them with his frightful appearance. This bird, which living was so formidable, being dead, the poorest wren or titmouse fears not to chirp, or hop over. This brings to my thoughts the base and ignoble ends of the greatest tyrants, and greedy ingrossers of the world, of whom, (whilst living) men were more afraid, than birds of a hawk, but dead, became objects of contempt and scorn. The death of such tyrants is both inglorious and unlamented: "When the wicked perish, there is shouting," Prov. xi. 10. Which was exemplified to the life, at the death of Nero, of whom the poet thus sings;

*Cum mors crudelem rapuisset sæva Neronem,
Credibile est multos Romam agitasse jocos.*

When cruel Nero dy'd th' historian tells,
How Rome did mourn with bonfires, plays, and bells.

Remarkable for contempt and shame have the ends of many bloody tyrants been. So Pompey the Great, of whom Claudian the poet sings,

*Nudus pascit aves, jacetne qui possidet orbem
Exiguæ telluris inops———*

Birds eat his flesh. Lo, now he cannot have
Who rul'd the world, a space to make a grave.

The like is storied of Alexander the Great, who lay unburied thirty days; and William the Conqueror, with many other such birds of prey: whilst a beneficial and holy life is usually closed up in an honourable and much lamented death.

For mine own part, I wish I may so order my conversation in the

world, that I may live, when I am dead, in the affections of the best, and leave an honourable testimony in the consciences of the worst ; that I may oppress none, do good to all, and say when I die, as good Ambrose did,—I am neither ashamed to live, nor afraid to die.

MEDITATION III.

Upon the Sight of a Blackbird taking Sanctuary in a Bush from a pursuing Hawk.

WHEN I saw how hardly the poor bird was put to it to save herself from her enemy, who hovered just over the bush in which she was fluttering and squeaking, I could not but hasten to relieve her, (pity and succour being a due debt to the distressed ;) which, when I had done, the bird would not depart from the bush, though her enemy were gone ; this act of kindness was abundantly repaid by this meditation, with which I returned to my walk : my soul, like this bird, was once distressed, pursued, yea, seized by Satan, who had certainly made a prey of it, had not Jesus Christ been a sanctuary to it in that hour of danger. How readily did I find him to receive my poor soul into his protection ? Then did he make good that sweet promise to my experience, Those that come unto me I will in no wise cast out. It called to mind that pretty and pertinent story of the philosopher, who walking in the fields, a bird, pursued by a hawk, flew into his bosom ; he took her out, and said, ‘ Poor bird, ‘ I will neither wrong thee, nor expose thee to thine enemy, since ‘ thou camest to me for refuge.’ So tender, and more than so, is the Lord Jesus to distressed souls that come unto him. Blessed Jesus ! how should I love and praise thee, glorify and admire thee, for that great salvation thou hast wrought for me ? If this bird had fallen into the claws of her enemy, she had been torn to pieces indeed, and devoured, but then a few minutes had dispatched her ; and ended all her pain and misery : but had my soul fallen into the hands of Satan, there had been no end of its misery.

Would not this scared bird be flushed out of the bush that secured her, though I had chased away her enemy ? And wilt thou, O my soul, ever be enticed or scared from Christ thy refuge ? O let this for ever engage thee to keep close to Christ, and make me say, with Ezra, “ And now, O Lord, since thou hast given me such a deliverance as this, should I again break thy commandments ! ”

MEDITATION IV.

Upon the sight of divers goldfinches intermingling with a flock of sparrows.

METHINKS these birds do fitly resemble the gaudy courtiers, and the plain peasants ; how spruce and richly adorned with

shining and various coloured feathers (like scarlet, richly laid with gold and silver lace) are those? How plainly clad, in a home-spun country russet are these? *Fine feathers* (saith our proverb) *make proud birds*; and yet the feathers of the sparrow are as useful and beneficial, both for warmth and flight, though not so gay and ornamental, as the others; and if both were stript out of their feathers, the sparrow would prove the better bird of the two: by which I see, that the greatest worth doth not always lie under the finest clothes: And besides, God can make mean and homely garments as useful and beneficial to poor and despised Christians, as the ruffling and shining garments of wanton gallants are to them: and when God shall strip men out of all external excellencies, these will be found to excel their glittering neighbours in true worth and excellency.

Little would a man think such rich treasures of grace, wisdom, humility, lay under some russet coats.

Sape sub attrita latitat sapientia veste.

Under poor garments more true worth may be
Than under silks that whistle, who but he.

Whilst, on the other side, “the heart of the wicked (as Solomon hath observed) is little worth,” how much soever his clothes be worth. Alas! it falls out too frequently among us, as it doth with men in the Indies, who walk over the rich veins of gold and ore, which lie hid under a ragged and barren surface, and know it not. For my own part, I desire not to value any man by what is extrin-sical and worldly, but by that true internal excellency of grace, which makes the face to shine in the eyes of God and good men: I would condemn a vile person, though never so glorious in the eye of the world; but honour such as fear the Lord, how sordid and despicable soever to appearance.



MEDIT. V.

Upon the sight of a Robin-red-breast picking up a Worm from a mole-hill, then rising.

OBSERVING the mole working industriously beneath, and the bird watching so intently above, I made a stand to observe the issue; when in a little time the bird descends, and seizes upon a Worm, which I perceived was crawling apace from the enemy below that hunted her, but fell to the share of another which from above waited for her. My thoughts presently suggested the *meditations* from that occasion: methought this poor worm seemed to be the emblem of my poor soul, which is more endangered by its own lusts of pride and covetousness, than this worm was by the mole and bird:

my pride, like the aspiring bird, watches for it above ; my covetousness, like the subterranean mole, digging for it beneath. Poor soul ! What a sad dilemma art thou brought to ? If thou go down into the caverns of this earth, there thou art a prey to thy covetousness that hunts thee ; and if thou aspire, or but creep upward, there thy pride waits to ensnare thee. Distressed soul ! whither wilt thou go ? Ascend thou mayest, not by vain elation, but by heavenly conversation, beside which there is no way for thy preservation ; “ the way “ of life is above to the wise,” &c.

Again, I could not but observe the accidental benefit this poor harmless bird obtained by the labour of the mole, who hunting intentionally for herself, unburroughed and ferreted out this worm for the bird, who, possibly, was hungry enough, and could not have been relieved for this time, but by the mole, the fruit of whose labour she now feeds upon. Even thus the Lord oft-times makes good his word to his people : “ The wealth of the wicked is laid up for the “ just.” And again, “ The earth shall help the woman.” This was fully exemplified in David, to whom Nabal, that churlish muckworm, speaks all in possessives : “ Shall I take my bread,” &c. “ and “ give it to one I know not whom ?” And yet David reaps the fruits of all the pains and toils of Nabal at last. Let it never encourage me to idleness, that God sometimes gives his people the fruit of others sweat, but if providence reduce me to necessity, and disable me from helping myself, I doubt not then, but it will provide instruments to do it. The bird was an hungry, and could not dig.



MEDIT. VI.

Upon the shooting of two Finches fighting in the air.

HOW soon hath death ended the quarrel betwixt these two little combatants ! had they agreed better, they might have lived longer ; it was their own contention that gave both the opportunity and the provocation of their death ; and though living they could not, yet, being dead, they can lie quietly together in my hand.

Foolish birds, was it not enough that birds of prey watched to devour them, but they must peck and scratch one another ? Thus have I seen the birds of paradise (saints I mean) tearing and wounding each other, like so many birds of prey, and by their unchristian contests giving the occasion of their common ruin ; yea, and that not only when at liberty, as these were, but when engaged also ; and yet, as one well observes, if ever Christians will agree, it will either be in a prison, or in heaven ; for in prison their quarrelsome lusts lie low, and in heaven they shall be utterly done away.

But O what pity is it, that those who shall agree so perfectly in heaven, should bite and devour each other upon earth ? That it should be said of them, as one ingeniously observed, who saw their carcasses lie

together, as if they had lovingly embraced each other, who fell together by a duel: *Quanta amicitia se invicem amplectuntur, qui mutua et implacabili inimicitia perierunt !*

*Embracing one another, now they lie,
Who by each other's bloody hands did die.*

Or, as he said, who observed how quietly and peaceably the dust and bones, even of enemies, did lie together in the grave; *Non tanta vivi pace conjuncti essetis*; you did not live together so peaceably. If conscience of Christ's command will not, yet the consideration of common safety should powerfully persuade to unity and amity.

MEDIT. VII.

Upon the singing of a blind finch by night.

A DEAR friend, who was a great observer of the works of God in nature, told me, that being entertained with a sight of many rarities at a friend's house in London; among other things his friends shewed him a *finch*, whose eyes being put out, would frequently sing, even at midnight. This bird, in my opinion, is the lively emblem of such careless and unconcerned persons as the prophet describes, Amos vi. 4, 5, 6. who chant to the viol, when a dismal night of trouble and affliction hath overshadowed the church. You would have thought it strange to have heard this bird sing in the night, when all others are in a deep silence except the owl, an unclean bird, and the nightingale, which before we made the emblem of the hypocrite. And as strange it is, that any, except the profane and hypocritical, should so unseasonably express their mirth and jollity; that any of Sion's children should live in pleasure, whilst she herself lies in tears. The people of God, in Psalm cxxxvii. tell us in what postures of sorrow they sat; even like birds, with their heads under their wings, during the night of their captivity. "How shall we sing the Lord's songs in a strange land?" It is like enough, such as can sing and chant in the night of the church's trouble, have well feathered their nests in the days of her prosperity; however, let them know, that God will turn their unseasonable mirth into a sadder note; and those that now sit sad and silent shall shortly sing for joy of heart, when "the winter is past, the rain over and gone, the flowers appear again upon the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come."

MEDIT. VII.

Upon the comparing of two Birds Nests.

IT is pretty to observe the structure and commodiousness of the habitations of these little architects, who, though they act not by

reason and counsel, but only by natural instinct, yet reason itself could hardly have contrived a neater building of such simple materials. How neatly hath the *thrush* ceiled or plastered his nest, with admirable art and industry! how warmly hath the *finch* matted his? And both well fenced against the injury of the weather.

How comfortably hath nature provided convenient habitations for these weak and tender young ones, who have warm lodging, and variety of provisions hourly brought them, without their care or pains? This trifling object suggests to my thoughts a more excellent and serious contemplation, even the wonderful and unparalleled abasement of Jesus Christ, who for my sake voluntarily submitted himself to a more destitute and neglected state, than these birds of the air: For Matth. viii. 20. he saith, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

"The craggy rock to foxes holes afford,

"The pleasant woods a resting-place to birds;

"For Chrisht no fixed habitation's found,

"But what was borrow'd, or the naked ground."*

O melting consideration! that the glorious Son of God, John i. 14. "The Lord of glory," James ii. 1. "The brightness of his Father's glory," Heb. i. 3. "Who was rich," 2 Cor. viii. 9. "and thought it not robbery to be equal with God," Phil. ii. 6. who from *all eternity* was infinitely and ineffably "delighting and rejoicing in the bosom of his Father," Prov. viii. 30. that he, I say, should manifest himself in flesh, 2 Tim. iii. 16. yea, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," Rom. viii. 3. that is, in flesh that had the marks and effects of sin upon it, as hunger, thirst, pain, weariness, and mortality, and not only so, but to chuse such a state of outward meanness and poverty, never being possessed of a house in this world; but living as a stranger in other men's houses, and stooping in this respect to a lower condition than the very birds of the air, and all this for enemies. O let it work both admiration and thankfulness in my soul! my body is better accommodated than the body of my Lord. "Dear Jesus! by how much the viler thou madest thyself for me, by so much the dearer shalt thou be to me."†

MEDIT. IX.

Upon the early singing of birds.

HOW am I reprov'd of sluggishness by these watchful birds! which cheerfully entertain the very dawning of the morning

* *Vulpibus in saltu rupes excisa latebras
Præbet, et aereis avibus dat silva quietem.
Ast hominis Nato nullis succedere tectis
Est licitum*——

Heins. in loc.

† *Quanto pro me vilior, tanto mihi charior.* Bern.

with their cheerful and delightful warblings ! They set their little spirits all a-work betimes, whilst my nobler spirits are bound with the bonds of soft and downy slumbers. For shame, my soul ! Suffer not that publican sleep to seize so much of thy time, yea, thy best and freshest time ! reprove and chide thy sluggish body, as a good bishop once did, when, upon the same occasion, he said, *Surrexerunt passerres, et stertnunt pontifices.*

*The early chirping sparrows may reprove
Such lazy bishops as their beds do love.*

Of many sluggards it may be said, as Tully said of Verres, the deputy of Sicily, *Quod nunquam solem nec orientem, nec occidentem viderat* : that he never saw the sun rising, being in bed after ; nor setting, being in bed before.

It is pity that Christians of all men, should suffer sleep to cut such large thongs out of so narrow a hide as their time on earth is. But alas ! it is not so much early rising, as a wise improving those fresh and free hours with God that will enrich the soul ; else, as our proverb saith, *A man may be early up, and never the nearer* ; yea, far better it is to be found in bed sleeping, than to be up doing nothing, or that which is worse than nothing. O my soul ! learn to prepossess thyself every morning with the thoughts of God, and suffer not those fresh and sweet operations of thy mind to be prostituted to earthly things ; for that is experimentally true, which * one, in this case hath pertinently observed, that if the world get the start of religion in the morning, it will be hard for religion to overtake it all the day after.



MEDIT. X.

Upon the haltering of Birds with a grain of Hair.

OBSERVING, in a snowy season, how the poor hungry birds were haltered and drawn in by a grain of hair cunningly cast over their heads, whilst, poor creatures, they were busily feeding, and suspected no danger ; and even whilst their companions were drawn away from them, one after another, all the interruption it gave the rest was only for a minute or two, whilst they stood peeping into that hole through which their companions were drawn, and then fell to their meat again as busily as before ; I could not chuse but say, ‘ Even thus surprizingly doth death steal upon the children of men, whilst they are wholly intent upon the cares and pleasures of this life, not at all suspecting its so near approach.’ These birds saw not the hand that ensnared them, nor do they see the hand of death plucking them one after another into the grave.

* Mr. Case, in Epist. to the Morn. Lect.

“Death steps as swift, and yet no noise it makes;
 “Its hand unseen, but yet most surely takes*.”

And even as the surviving birds for a little time seemed to stand affrighted, peeping after their companions, and then as busy as ever to their meat again; just so it fares with the careless, inconsiderate world, who see others daily dropping into eternity round about them, and for the present are a little startled, and will look into the grave after their neighbours, and then fall as busily to their earthly employments and pleasures again, as ever, till their own turn comes.

I know, my God, that I must die as well as others; but O let me not die as others do, let me see death before I feel it, and conquer it before it kill me; let it not come as an enemy upon my back, but rather let me meet it as a friend, half way. Die I must, but let me lay up that good treasure before I go, Matt. vi. 19. Carry with me a good conscience when I go, 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7. and leave behind me a good example when I am gone, and then let death come, and welcome.

MEDITATIONS upon BEASTS.

MEDIT. I.

Upon the clogging of a straying beast.

HAD this bullock contented himself, and remained quietly within his own bounds, his owner had never put such an heavy clog upon his neck; but I see the prudent husbandman chuses rather to keep him with this clog, than lose him for want of one. What this clog is to him, that is affliction and trouble to me; had my soul kept close with God in liberty and prosperity, he would never thus have clogged me with adversity; yea, and happy were it for me, if I might stray from God no more, who hath thus clogged me with preventive afflictions. If, with David I might say, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word,” Psalm cxix. 67. O my soul! it is better for thee to have thy pride clogged with poverty, thy ambition with reproach, thy carnal expectancies with constant disappointments, than to be at liberty to run from God and duty.

It is true, I am sometimes as weary of these troubles, as this poor beast is of the clog he draws after him, and often wish myself rid of them; but yet, if God should take them off, for ought I know, I might have cause to wish them on again, to prevent a greater mischief. It is storied of Basil, that for many years he was sorely afflicted with an inveterate head-ach, (that was his clog) he often prayed for

* *Omnibus obscuras injectit illa manus.* Ovid.

the removal of it; at last God removed it, but instead thereof he was sorely exercised with the motions and temptations of lust, which when he perceived, he as earnestly desired his head-ach again, to prevent a greater evil. Lord! if my corruptions may be prevented by my afflictions, I refuse not to be clogged with them; but my soul rather desires thou wouldest hasten the time when I shall be for ever freed from them both.



MEDIT. II.

Upon the love of a Dog to his Master.

HOW many a weary step, through mire and dirt, hath this poor dog followed my horse's heels to day, and all this for a very poor reward? for all he gets by it at night, is but bones and blows, yet will he not leave my company, but is content upon such hard terms, to travel with me from day to day.

O my soul! what conviction and shame may this leave upon thee, who art oftentimes even weary of following thy master, Christ, whose rewards and encouragements of obedience are so incomparably sweet and sure! I cannot beat back this dog from following me, but every inconsiderable trouble is enough to discourage me in the way of my duty. Ready I am to resolve as that scribe did, Matth. viii. 19. "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;" but how doth my heart falter, when I must encounter with the difficulties of the way? Oh! let me make a whole heart-choice of Christ for my portion and happiness! and then I shall never leave him, nor turn back from following him, though the present difficulties were much more, and the present encouragements much less.



MEDIT. III.

Upon the fighting of two Rams.

TAKING notice how furiously these sheep, which by nature are mild and gentle, did yet, like bulls, push each other, taking their advantage by going back to meet with a greater rage and fury: methought I saw in this a plain emblem of the unchristian contests and animosities which fall out amongst them that call themselves the people of God, who are in scripture also stiled sheep, for their meekness and innocency; and yet, through the remaining corruptions that are in them, thus do they push each other; as one long since complained,

— non secus ac
Cum duo conversis inimica in praelia tauri,
Frontibus incurrunt—

Shall Christians one another wound and push,
Like furious bulls, when they together rush?

The fighting of these sheep doth in two respects notably comport with the sinful practices of contending Christians, 1. That in this fight they engage with their heads one against another: and what are they but those head-notions, or *opposition of sciences* falsely so called, that have made so many broils and uproars in the Christian world? O! what clashings have these heady opinions caused in the churches! First heads, and then hearts have clashed. Christians have not distinguished betwixt *adversarius litis, et personæ*; an adversary to the *opinion*, and to the *person*; but dipt their tongues and pens in vinegar and gall, shamefully aspersing and reproaching one another, because their understandings were not cast into one mould, and their heads all of a bigness. But, 2. That which country-men observe from the fighting of sheep, *That it presages foul and stormy weather*, is much more certainly consequent upon the fighting of Christ's sheep. Do these clash and push? Surely *it is an infallible prognostic of an ensuing storm*, Mal. iv. 6.

MEDIT. IV.

Upon the Catching of an Horse in a fat Pasture.

WHEN this horse was kept in poor short leas, where he had much scope, but little grass, how gentle and tractable was he then? He would not only stand quiet to be taken, but come to hand of his own accord, and follow me up and down the field for a crust of bread, or handful of oats; but since I turned him into this fat pasture, he comes no more to me, nor will suffer me to come near him, but throws up his heels wantonly against me, and flies from me as if I were rather his enemy than a benefactor. In this I behold the carriage of my own heart towards God, who the more he hath done for me, the seldomer doth he hear from me; in a low and afflicted state, how tractable is my heart to duty? Then it comes to the foot of God voluntarily. But in an exalted condition, how wildly doth my heart run from God and duty? With this ungrateful requital God faulted his own people, Jer. iii. 31. teachable and tractable in the wilderness, but when fatted in that rich pasture of Canaan, "Then we are lords, we will come no more to thee." How soon are all God's former benefits forgotten? And now often is that ancient observation * verified, even in his own people?

"No sooner do we gifts on some bestow,
"But presently our gifts grey-headed grow."

* Μετα την δόσιν ταχιστα γηρασκει χάρις.
Post munera cito consenescit gratia.

But that is a bad tenant, that will maintain a suit at law against his landlord with his own rent ; and a bad heart, that will fight against God with his own mercies. I wish it may be with my heart, as it is reported to be with the waters in the kingdom of Congo, that are never so sweet to the taste, as when the tide is at the highest.



MEDIT. V.

Upon the hunting of a Deer.

THE full-mouthed cry of these dogs, which from the morning have hunted this poor tired deer, which is now no longer able to stand before them, but is compassed round with them, who thirst for, and will presently suck her blood, brings to my thoughts the condition and state of Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh, who was thus hunted from place to place by blood-thirsty enemies. Upon this very account, the 22d Psalm, which treats of his death, is inscribed with the title of *Ajieleth Shahar*, which signifies the *hind of the morning*, and fully imports the same notion which this occasion presented me with ; for look, as the *hind* or *deer*, which is intended to be run down that day, is roused by the dogs early in the morning, so was Christ, in the very morning of his infancy, by bloody Herod, and that cruel pack confederated with him. Thus was he chased from place to place, till that was fulfilled which was prophetically written of him in ver. 16. of the forecited Psalm : “ For dogs have compassed me about, “ the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me ; they pierced my “ hands and my feet.”

And canst thou expect, O my soul ! to fare better than he did, or escape the rage of bloody men ? Surely, if the Spirit of Christ dwell in thee, if his holiness have favoured thee, these dogs will wind it, and give thee chase too : they go upon the scent of holiness still, and would hunt to destruction everyone, in whom there is *aliquid Christi*, any thing of Christ, if the gracious providence of the Lord did not sometimes rate them off : for it is no less a pleasure which some wicked ones take in hunting the people of God, than what * Claudian the poet observes men use to take in hunting wild beasts.

“ Whilst every huntsman in the night do sleep,

“ Their fancies in the woods still hunting keep.”

Lord ! should I with the hypocrite decline the profession and practice of holiness, to escape the rage of persecuting enemies, at what time they cease, my own conscience would begin to hunt me like a blood-hound ; let me rather chuse to be chased by men than God, to flee

* *Venator defessa thero quum membra reponit,
Mens tamen ad sylvas, et sua lustra redit.* Claud.

before pursuing enemies, than be dogged from day to day with a guilty conscience.

MEDITATIONS upon TREES.

MEDIT. I.

Upon the fall of Blossoms, nipt by a frosty morning.

BEHOLDING in an early spring, fruit-trees embossed with beautiful blossoms of various colours, which breathed forth their delicious odours into the circumambient air, and adorned the branches on which they grew, like so many rich jewels, or glittering pendants; and further observing, how these perfumed blossoms dropt off, being bitten with the frost, and discoloured all the ground, as if a shower of snow had fallen; I said within myself, these sweet and early blossoms are not unlike my sweet and early affections to the Lord in the days of my first acquaintance with him. O what fervent love, panting desires, and heavenly delights beautified my soul in those days! The odoriferous scent of the sweetest blossoms, the morning breath of the most fragrant flowers, hath not half that sweetness with which those my first affections were enriched. O! happy time, thrice pleasant spring! My soul hath it still in remembrance, and is humbled within me; for these also were but blossoms which now are nipt and faded, that first flourish is gone; my heart is like the winter's earth, because thy face, Lord, is to me like a winter sun. "Awake, O north wind! "and come, south wind, blow upon my garden, that the spices there- "of may flow out, then let my beloved come into his garden, and "eat his pleasant fruit!"

MEDIT. II.

Upon the knitting, or setting of Fruit.

IHAVE often observed, that when the blossoms of a tree set and knit, though the flourish thereof be gone, and nothing but the bare rudiment of the expected fruit be left; yet then the fruit is much better secured from the danger of frosts and winds, than whilst it remained in the flower or blossom; for now it hath past one of those *critical periods*, in which so many trees miscarry and lose their fruit. And methought this *natural observation* fairly led me to this *theological proposition*, 'That good motions, and holy purposes in the soul, 'are never secured, and past their most dangerous *crisis*, till they 'be turned into fixed resolutions, and answerable executions, which 'is as the knitting and setting of them.'

Upon this proposition my melting thoughts thus dilated: happy had it been for thee, my soul! had all the blessed motions of the

Spirit been thus knit and fixed in thee. Oh, how have mine affections blown and budded under the warm beams of the gospel! But a chill blast from the cares, troubles and delights of the world without, and the vanity and deadness of the heart within, have blasted all; my goodness hath been but as a morning-dew, or early cloud, that vanisheth away. And even of divine ordinances, I may say what is said of human ordinances, "They have perished in the using." A blossom is but *fructus imperfectus, et ordinabilis*, an imperfect thing in itself, and something in order to fruit; a good motion and holy purpose is but *opus imperfectum, et ordinabile*, an imperfect work, in order to a complete work of the Spirit; when that *primus impetus*, those first motions were strong upon my heart, had I then pursued them in the force and vigour of them, how many difficulties might I have overcome? Revive thy work, O Lord, and give not to my soul a miscarrying womb, or dry breasts.

MEDIT. III.

Upon the sight of a fair spreading Oak.

WHAT a lofty flourishing tree is here? It seems rather to be a little wood, than a single tree, every limb thereof having the dimensions and branches of a tree in it; and yet as great as it is, it was once but a little slip, which one might pull up with two fingers; this vast body was contained virtually and potentially in a small acorn. Well then, I will never despise the day of small things, nor despair of arriving to an eminency of grace, though at present it be but as a bruised reed, and the things that are in me be ready to die. As things in nature, so the things of the Spirit, grow up to their fulness and perfection by slow and insensible degrees. The famous and heroical acts of the most renowned believers were such as themselves could not once perform, or it may be think they ever should. Great things, both in nature and grace, come from small and contemptible beginnings.

MEDIT. IV.

Upon the sight of many sticks lodged in the branches of a choice Fruit-tree.

HOW is this tree battered with stones, and loaded with sticks, that have been thrown at it, whilst those that grow about it, being barren, or bearing harsher fruit, escape untouched! Surely if its fruit had not been so good, its usage had not been so bad. And yet it is affirmed, that some trees, as the walnut, &c. bear the better for being thus bruised and battered.

Even thus it fares in both respects with the best of men; the more holy, the more envied and persecuted; every one that passes by will have a sling at them. Methinks I see how devils and wicked men walk round about the people of God, whom he hath inclosed in his arms of power, like so many boys about an orchard, whose lips water to have a sling at them. But God turns all the stones of reproach into precious stones to his people; they bear the better for being thus battered. And in them is that ancient * observation verified.

“ The palms and crowns of virtue thus increase;

“ Thus persecution’s turned into peace.”

Let me be but fruitful to God in holiness, and ever abounding in the work of the Lord, and then whilst devils and men are flinging at me, either by hand or tongue persecutions, I will sing amidst them all with the divine poet :

“ What open force, or hidden charm,

“ Can blast my fruit, or bring me harm,

“ Whilst the inclosure is thine arm.” *Herb. Poem, p. 125.*

MEDIT. V.

Upon the gathering of choice Fruit from a scrubbed unpromising Tree.

WOULD any man think to find such rare delicious fruit upon such an unworthy tree to appearance as this is? I should rather have expected the most delicious fruit from the most handsome and flourishing trees; but I see I must neither judge the worth of trees or men by their external form and appearance. This is not the first time I have been deceived in judging by that rule; under fair and promising outsides I have found nothing of worth; and in many deformed despicable bodies I have found precious and richly furnished souls. The sap and juice of this scrubbed tree is concocted into rare and excellent fruits, whilst the juice and sap of some other fair, but barren trees, serves only to keep them from rotting, which is all the use that many souls (which dwell in beautiful bodies) serve for; they have (as one saith) *animam pro sale*; their souls are but salt to their bodies. Or thus,

The only use to which their souls do serve,

Is but like salt their bodies to preserve.

If God have given me a sound soul in a sound body, I have a double mercy to bless him for; but whether my body be vigorous and

* *Crescunt virtutum palmæ, crescuntque coronæ
Mutantur mundi prælia, pace Dei.*

beautiful, or not, yet let my soul be so : for as the esteem of this tree, so the esteem and true honour of every man, rises rather from his fruitfulness and usefulness, than from his shape and form.

MEDIT. VI.

Upon an excellent, but irregular Tree.

SEEING a tree grow somewhat irregular, in a very neat orchard, I told the owner it was pity that tree should stand there ; and that if it were mine I would root it up, and thereby reduce the orchard to an exact uniformity. It was replied to this purpose, ‘ That he ‘ rather regarded the fruit than the form ;’ and that this slight inconveniency was abundantly preponderated by a more considerable advantage. This tree, *said he*, which you would root up, hath yielded me more fruit than many of those trees which have nothing else to commend them but their regular situation. I could not but yield to the reason of this answer ; and could wish it had been spoken so loud, that all our uniformity-men had heard it, who will not stick to root up many hundred of the best bearers in the Lord’s orchard, because they stand not in an exact order with other more conformable, but less beneficial trees, who *perdunt substantiam propter accidentia*, destroy the fruit to preserve the form.

Not much unlike, such foolish men are those,
That strive for shadows, and the substance lose.



MEDITATIONS upon a GARDEN.

MEDIT. I.

Upon the new-modelling of a Garden.

A Gentlewoman who had lately seen a neat and curious garden, returns to her own with a greater dislike of it than ever ; resolves to new-model the whole plat, and reduce it to a better form. She is now become so curious and neat, that not a weed or stone is suffered in it, but all must lie in exquisite order ; and whatever ornament she had observed in her neighbour’s, she is now restless till she sees it in her own.

Happy were it, thought I, if in an holy emulation every one would thus endeavour to rectify the disorders of their own conversation, by the excellent graces they behold in the more heavenly and regular lives of others. Some Christians there are (I wish their number were greater) whose actions lie in such a comely and beautiful order, that few of their neighbours can look upon their examples without

self-conviction and shame; but few are so happy to be provoked into self-reformation by such rare patterns. I see it is much easier to pull up many weeds out of a garden, than one corruption out of the heart; and to procure an hundred flowers to adorn a knot, than one grace to beautify the soul. It is more natural to corrupt man to envy, than to imitate the spiritual excellencies of others.

MEDIT. II.

Upon the pulling up of a Leek.

A WHITE head and a green tail! How well doth this resemble an old wanton lover, whose green youthful lusts are not extinguished, though his white head declares that nature is almost so! Gray hairs should be always matched with grave deportments; and the sins of youth should rather be the griefs than pleasures of old age. It is sad when the sins of the soul, like the diseases of the body, grow stronger, as nature grows weaker: and it recalls to my mind that ancient observation of * Menander:

“It is the worst of evils, to behold

“Strong youthful lusts to rage in one that’s old.”

It is a thousand pities, that those who have one foot in the grave, should live as if the other were in hell! that their lusts should be so lively, when their bodies are three parts dead! Such sinful practices, bring upon them more contempt and shame, than their hoary heads, and reverend faces can procure them honour.

“Gray hairs, and aged wrinkles, did of old

“Procure more reverence than bags of gold†.”

But alas! how little respect or reverence can the hoary head obtain amongst wise men, except it be found in the way of righteousness? I think the lowest esteem is too much for an old servant of the devil; and the highest honour little enough for an ancient and faithful servant of Christ.

MEDIT. III.

Upon a heedless tread in a curious Garden.

PASSING through the small divisions of a curious knot, which was richly adorned with rare tulips, and other beautiful flowers;

* Τεγωνθεγαςης εσχατη κακη τυχη.

Senex amore captus, ultimum malum. Menand.

† Magna fuit capitis quondam reverentia cani,

Inque suo pretio ruga senilis erat. Ovid. 5 Fast.

I was very careful to shun these flowers, which indeed had no other worth to commend them, but their exquisite colour; and unadvisedly trod upon and spoiled an excellent choice herb, which, though it grew obscurely, yet had rare physical virtues in it.

When I was made sensible of the involuntary trespass I had committed, I thought I could scarcely make the owner a better compensation, than by telling him, that herein (though against my will) I did but tread in the footsteps of the greatest part of the world who are very careful (as I was) to keep their due distance from splendid, though worthless gallants, mean while trampling upon, and crushing under foot the obscure, but most precious servants of God in the world. As little do they heed these most excellent persons, as I did this precious herb.

Summa ingenia in occulto sæpe latent, saith Plautus.

Rare wits, and herbs, sometimes do sculk and shrink
In such blind holes, as one would little think.

For my own part, I desire to tread upon no man with the foot of contempt and pride, much less upon any good man; and that I may not, it concerns me to look before I step; I mean, to consider before I censure: had I done so by this rare herb, I had never hurt it.



MEDIT. IV.

Upon a withered posy taken up in the way.

FINDING in my walk, a posy of once sweet and fragrant, but now dry and withered flowers, which I suppose to be thrown away by one that had formerly worn it: thus, said I, doth the unfaithful world use its friends, when providence hath blasted and withered them; whilst they are rich and honourable, they will put them into their bosoms, as the owner of this posy did, whilst it was fresh and fragrant, and as easily throw them away as useless and worthless things, when thus they come to be withered. Such usage as this* Petronius long since complained of.

“Are they in honour? Then we smile like friends;

“And with their fortunes all our friendship ends.”

But this loose and deceitful friend stinks so odiously in the very nostrils of nature, that a † *heathen poet* severely taxes and condemns it as most unworthy of a man.

* *Cum fortuna manet vultum servatis amici,
Cum cecidit turpi vertitis ora fuga.* Petronius.

† *Turpe sequi casum, et fortunæ cedere, amicum
Et nisi sit fœlix et essnegare suum.*

“ 'Tis base to change with fortune, and deny
 “ A faithful friend, because in poverty.”

And is this indeed the friendship of the world? Doth it thus use them whom once it honoured? Then, Lord! let me never seek its friendship. O let me esteem the smiles and honours of men less, and thy love and favour more! thy love is indeed unchangeable, being pure, free, and built upon nothing that is mutable; thou never servest thy friends as the world doth its darlings.

MEDIT. V.

Upon the sudden withering of a Rose.

BEING with my friend in a garden, we gathered each of us a rose; he handled his tenderly, smelled to it but seldom, and sparingly; I always kept it to my nose, or squeezed it in my hand, whereby in a very short time it lost both colour and sweetness, but his still remained as sweet and fragrant as if it had been growing upon its own root. These roses, said I, are the true emblems of the best and sweetest creature-enjoyments in the world, which being moderately and cautiously used and enjoyed, may for a long time yield sweetness to the possessor of them; but if once the affection seize too greedily upon them, and squeeze them too hard, they quickly wither in our hands, and we lose the comfort of them, and that either through the soul's surfeiting upon them, or the Lord's righteous and just removal of them, because of the excess of our affections to them; earthly comforts, like pictures, shew best at a due distance. It was therefore a good saying of * Homer, Ἀνδρὶ ζεινοδοκῶ, &c.

“ I like him not, who at the rate
 “ Of all his might doth love or hate.”

It is a point of excellent wisdom to keep the golden bridle of moderation upon all the affections we exercise upon earthly things, and never to slip those reins, unless when they move towards God, in whose love there is no danger of excess.

MEDIT. VI.

Upon the sudden withering of beautiful Flowers.

HOW fresh and orient did these flowers lately appear, when being dashed over with the morning dew, they stood in all their pride and glory, breathing out their delicious odours, which perfumed the air

* *Mhi nunquam is placet hospes
 Qui valde preterque modum odit vel amat.* Homer.

round about them, but now are withered and shrivelled up, and have neither any desirable beauty or savour in them.

So vain a thing is the admired beauty of creatures, which so captivates the hearts, and exercises a pleasing tyranny over the affections of vain man, yet it is as suddenly blasted as the beauty of a flower*.

“ How frail is beauty in how short a time

“ It fades, like roses, which have past their prime.

“ So wrinkled age the fairest face will plow,

“ And cast deep furrows on the smoothest brow.

“ Then where’s that lovely tempting face? Alas!

“ Yourselves would blush to view it in a glass.”

If then thou delightest in beauty, O my soul! chuse that which is lasting. There is a beauty which never fades, even the beauty of holiness upon the inner man; this abides fresh and orient for ever, and sparkles gloriously, when thy face (the seat of natural beauty) is become an abhorrent and loathsome spectacle. Holiness enamels and sprinkles over the face of the soul with a beauty, upon which Christ himself is enamoured; even imperfect holiness on earth is a rose that breathes sweetly in the bud; in heaven it will be full-blown, and abide in its prime to all eternity.



MEDIT. VII.

Upon the tenderness of some choice Flowers.

HOW much care is necessary to preserve the life of some flowers! they must be boxed up in the winter, others must be covered with glasses in their springing up, the finest and richest mould must be sifted about the roots, and assiduously watered, and all this little enough, and sometimes too little to preserve them; whilst other common and worthless flowers grow without any help of ours: Yea, we have no less to do to rid our gardens of them, than we have to make the former grow there.

Thus stands the case with our hearts, in reference to the motions of grace and sin. Holy thoughts of God must be assiduously watered by prayer, earthed up by meditation, and defended by watchfulness; and yet all this is sometimes too little to preserve them alive in our souls. Alas! the heart is a soil that agrees not with them, they

* *Forma bonum fragile est, quantumque accedit ad annos,
Fit minor, et spatio carpitur ipsa suo.
Nec semper violæ, nec semper lilia florent,
Et riget amissa spina relicta rosa
Tempus erit quo vos speculum vidisse pigebit,
Jam veniunt rugæ quæ tibi corpus arent, &c. Ovid. de Art.*

are tender things, and a small matter will nip and kill them. To this purpose is the complaint of the divine Poet:

Who would have thought a joy
 so coy
 To be offended so,
 and go
 So suddenly away?
 Hereafter I had need
 take heed.
 Joys among other things
 have wings,
 And watch their opportunities of flight,
 Converting in a moment, day to night. Herbert.

But vain thoughts, and unholy suggestions, these spread themselves and root deep in the heart; they naturally agree with the soil: So that it is almost impossible, at any time, to be rid of them. It is hard to forget what is our sin to remember.



MEDIT VIII.

Upon the strange means of preserving the life of Vegetables.

I OBSERVE that plants and herbs are sometimes killed by frosts, and yet without frosts they would neither live nor thrive: They are sometimes drowned with water, and yet without water they cannot subsist: They are refreshed and cheered by the heat of the sun, and yet that sun sometimes kills and scorches them up. Thus lives my soul: Troubles and afflictions seem to kill all its comforts; and yet without these, its comforts could not live. The sun-blasts of prosperity sometimes refresh me, and yet those sun-blasts are the likeliest way to wither me: By what seeming contradictions is the life of my spirit preserved! what a mystery, what a paradox is the life of a Christian?

Welcome my health, this sickness makes me well.
 Med'cines adieu.
 When with diseases I have list to dwell,
 I'll wish for you.
 Welcome, my strength, this weakness makes me able.
 Powers adieu.
 When I am weary grown of standing stable,
 I'll wish for you.
 Welcome, my wealth, this loss hath gain'd me more.
 Riches adieu.

When I again grow greedy to be poor,
I'll wish for you.

Welcome, my credit, this disgrace is glory,
Honours adieu.

When for renown and fame I shall be sorry,
I'll wish for you.

Welcome content, this sorrow is my joy.
Pleasures adieu.

When I desire such griefs as may annoy,
I'll wish for you.

Health, strength, and riches, credit and content,
Are spared best sometimes when they are spent.
Sickness and weakness, loss, disgrace and sorrow,
Lend most sometimes, when most they seem to borrow.

And if by these contrary and improbable ways the Lord preserves our souls in life, no marvel then we find such strange and seemingly contradictory motions of our hearts, under the various dealings of God with us, and are still restless, in what condition soever he puts us; which restless frame was excellently expressed in that pious epigram of the reverend Gataker, made a little before his death.

I thirst for thirstiness, I weep for tears,

Well pleas'd I am to be displeased thus:

The only thing I fear, is want of fears,

Suspecting I am not suspicious.

I cannot chuse but live, because I die;

And when I am not dead, how glad am I?

Yet when I am thus glad for sense of pain,

And careful am, lest I should careless be;

Then do I grieve for being glad again,

And fear, lest carefulness take care for me.

Amidst these restless thoughts this rest I find,

For those that rest not here, there's rest behind.

Jam tetigi portum, valete.