

composed on a fine morning in spring, while enjoying the scenery he there describes. This has not always been the case with those who have excelled in the description of rural scenes. With them imagination and

There, the stately forest bending,

Thrives amidst the limpid streams;

Whilst the source of day ascending,

Crowns it with his mildest beams.

## IV.

“ Now the kind refreshing showers

Water all the plains around;

Springing grass and painted flowers

O’er the smiling meads abound:

Now, their vernal dress assuming,

Leafy robes adorn the trees;

Odours now, the air perfuming,

Sweetly swell the gentle breeze.

## V.

“ Now the tuneful tribes delight us,

Perching on the bloomy spray,

And to gratitude invite us,

With their sweetly dying lay:

Now the shrill-tongued blackbird singing,

Loudly sounds its Maker’s praise;

All the spacious valleys ringing,

Teach us thankful songs to raise.

## VI.

“ Praise to thee, thou great Creator,

Praise be thine from every tongue;

Join, my soul, with every creature,

Join the universal song;

For ten thousand blessings given,

For the richest gifts bestow’d,

Sound his praise through earth and heaven,

Sound Jehovah’s praise aloud.”



recollection have often supplied the place of actual enjoyment. The biographer of Thomson informs us, that his "*Seasons*" were written in a situation most unfavourable for seeing what he so admirably describes. These miscellaneous poems, with many others which might be referred to in this volume, principally owe their origin to a friendly connexion with a venerable widow and her three daughters, who resided at Gildersome near Leeds. The deceased husband had been one of Dr. Doddridge's pupils, and having settled as minister at Gildersome, died in the prime of life. Enjoying a decent competency, the attention of the widowed mother, who was eminently distinguished by her sterling sense and piety, was devoted to the education of her young family. Her exertions to train them up in the ways of virtue and religion were attended with a Divine blessing; they all became members of the Baptist church at Gildersome. For Dr. Young's "*Night Thoughts*" she had a particular regard, and frequently mentioned having had the pleasure of seeing and expressing her gratitude to a writer to whom she felt herself so much indebted. The younger branches of her family fully entered into her views and sentiments. Much of their time was spent in reading books on religious subjects, and on different branches of polite learning, particularly poetry, in which some of them had a talent for original composition. Mr. F. being often engaged to visit Gildersome in his ministerial capacity, became acquainted with this exemplary family, and the mother, accompanied by one or more of her daughters, occasionally accepted the invitation to spend a few weeks during the summer at Brearley Hall. To this they were induced from motives of friendship, and



particularly that they might have the opportunity of attending the ministry of one whose views were so congenial with their own. Many fragments of poetry addressed to this pious family yet remain, besides those contained in the volume of hymns. In a humble way, the solicitation of these friends produced the same effect which the hints dropped by Mrs. Unwin and others of Cowper's inmates, sometimes in a playful manner, and at others in the form of request, produced, in directing his attention to the composition of those works which have immortalized his name.

It has often been remarked that there is a close connexion between a taste for poetry and music. Milton, after he was blind, dissipated the tedium which he might otherwise have felt, by playing upon the organ. The happy effect of music in affording a temporary relief from the sense of pain, was often evidenced by the subject of this memoir. Upon his bodily frame it appeared to produce an effect somewhat similar to the harp of David on the disordered mind of the King of Israel. This was the principal relaxation which he allowed himself from his severer studies. The acquaintance with the family now mentioned greatly tended to enlarge the sources of enjoyment, in this respect, to himself and his domestic circle. He was particularly partial to the solemn strains adapted to the full-toned swelling organ. The hundredth Psalm tune, said to be composed by Martin Luther, was his favourite; and the delight with which he sometimes listened to parts of Handel's Messiah, rehearsed in his own house, will not soon be forgotten by those who were present. The charms of the music, however, were in themselves an inferior consideration. The sublimity of the words, as descriptive of the suffer-

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ings, the character, the offices, and triumphs of the Messiah, to which the melodies were so well adapted, formed the principal attraction. The objections which some good men have made to the public exhibition of this and other pieces of sacred music, as performances, were in this case inapplicable; as the hours devoted to these purposes evidently had a tendency, both at the time and on recollection, to inspire and promote devout feelings. If the acts of praise and thanksgiving will form an essential part of the blissful employment of heaven, surely it is the duty, as well as the privilege, of those who are waiting for the consummation of their hopes and wishes, to begin their songs on earth. The more we enter into the true spirit of religion, the more we shall be desirous to anticipate that 'song of Moses and of the Lamb,' which will resound through the angelic choir. What that song will be, exceeds the powers of human imagination fully to conceive: but in retracing the period now referred to, the writer is reminded of numbers now no more in this world, and in particular of the family, the incidental mention of which gave rise to these observations, who have left an honourable testimony behind them of the power and efficacy of Divine grace, and now join the blissful society of heaven; where those anthems which they often sung on earth, with tears in their eyes, are exchanged for the notes which angels use, and which the beatific vision of God alone can inspire.

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In the former part of this work an account has been given of the association which existed in the Baptist denomination, at the time when the subject of this nar-



rative began his public ministry and continued for several years after; some of the causes of its dissolution were also assigned. An annual lecture was still kept up at some of the places, with a view to maintain a friendly connexion; but as no letters were written, nor any account of the existing state of the churches brought forward, the advantages of Christian communion were not experienced in such a degree as many wished. Many began to regret the suspension of their associate meetings, which in some measure operate upon the minds of good men, as we may suppose the annual journeys of the children of Israel did upon the pious among them, at the return of the passover. The psalmist David most beautifully describes his feelings on these interesting occasions, 'Thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.'

A circular letter was in consequence addressed, by several of the ministers, to the churches; in which they disclaimed every idea of a wish to infringe their liberties and privileges as independent societies, or the remotest attempt to exercise dominion over their faith and consciences. The design being approved of by several of the churches, the first meeting of this kind was held at Colne, May 30 and 31, 1787, on which occasion a letter was read, written by Mr. F. on the privileges and duties of gospel churches. It was intended to explain more particularly the objects they had in view in establishing that union, which was now denominated the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association. About seventeen churches at first entered into the connexion, but the number has been considerably increased both by the accession of some which at first declined to unite, and of others which have been recently established; ex-



perience having shown that the objects in view were simply to promote the prosperity of the cause of religion and the fellowship of Christians. In the plan of this and other similar associations, now so general among the Baptists, it has been found that there is nothing inconsistent with the rights of private judgment. Public preaching, social prayer, reading the letters from the churches, stating the events which have taken place among them as a religious body in the preceding year, with the circumstances, prosperous or adverse, which led to an increase or diminution of their numbers, the ways and means for promoting the spread of the Gospel, and a circular letter addressed to the churches, are the objects which engage and interest the attention.

It has been questioned by some judicious men, whether an improvement might not be made in the plan of the circular letter, by postponing the writing of it till after the letters from the churches are read; when the remarks addressed to them might be grounded on their existing situations, as detailed in these letters. This is the method adopted by the Society of Friends in the epistles written for the use of that respectable body of people at the close of their annual meetings; the advice contained in them is often highly deserving of the attentive perusal of other denominations.

Some advantages, and no doubt inconveniences also, might attend a deviation from the present practice. According to the existing plan, the writer of the letter has an opportunity of taking a retrospective view of the statements at the prior meetings, and of dropping such hints as the case requires. These annual publications, though extensively circulated among the churches, on account of the smallness of the size, and fugitive form, are



seldom carefully preserved, but they are of considerable worth and interest, as they not only have a tendency to direct the attention of ministers to composition, and thus to bring their abilities in this way into exercise, but they collectively exhibit a comprehensive view of the Gospel system in doctrine, and in practice. The letters published by the Northamptonshire and other associations in the south and west of England are many of them of great value. The talents of Fuller, Sutcliffe, Francis, Beddome, Hall, and Ryland, were in early life usefully employed in this way. These ephemeral productions were the prelude of those invaluable works which afterwards made their appearance; and it will no doubt be recollected by many, that a great part of the books published by the subject of this memoir, owed their origin to the sermons he preached, and the circular letters he wrote, on these public occasions. He was often requested to print single sermons, and in some cases he complied; but he had in general a great objection to it, as, however they may arrest the attention, either from their own impressive nature, or from local circumstances, they are often doomed to neglect and sink into oblivion. From this and other considerations he was induced, in several instances, to enlarge upon the ideas he delivered in sermons, and publish them in a more permanent form.

He was, for a long course of years, regularly invited to take part in the public services, at these associated meetings; and he, or his friend Mr. Crabtree, frequently preached the concluding discourses. The subjects he invariably fixed upon, were such as he considered to be of the greatest importance; such as were of general concernment; at once calculated to encourage and



edify the minds of professing Christians, and to awaken the attention of the careless and unconcerned.

In a letter, lately received from a worthy minister in the neighbourhood, after having expressed his sentiments of the deceased, as a minister and a writer, he says, "It is almost forty years since I first heard him preach at an association at Ackrington. The subject was the nature and necessity of religion. At the conclusion of the service, that admirable hymn, composed by himself, and afterwards inserted in his Hymn-book, was sung :

" ' Religion is the chief concern

Of mortals here below :

May I its great importance learn,

Its sovereign virtues know ! " &c.

" This sermon was profitable to many ; and has left a strong and lasting impression on my mind.

" A few years ago, he was engaged on a similar occasion at Bacup ; the text was, Rev. v. 12 : ' Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,' &c. I never saw a congregation so much affected. The remembrance of it is still precious to those who were present. He delivered another memorable discourse at Salendine Nook, on the mystery of Providence. His last sermon there was, on the glory of the heavenly state, from the words of the Psalmist, ' The Lord will give grace and glory.' I am ready to suppose that some who sat under the sound of his voice, at that time, will recollect what they then heard, till they come to the actual enjoyment of it, and that the employment of heaven itself will not efface the remembrance of it. If it were necessary to describe the strain of his preaching, on these occasions, I



might say, it was nervous, plain, and practical, adapted at once to inform the judgment, and comfort the heart. Our association must suffer a severe loss by his decease; but while we mournfully exclaim, 'Our fathers, where are they; and the prophets, do they live for ever?' we may take comfort from this consideration, that 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'"

The mention of a few other texts will call to mind, in some who yet survive, the effect produced by his sermons, when addressing the multitudes assembled on these occasions.

At Rochdale, May 19, 1785, Amos iv. 12: 'Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.'\*

\* The outlines of this sermon are here inserted, not as displaying particular ability, but as showing the earnest desire he had to improve those seasons for the spiritual advantage of his hearers. I. The meeting here intended calls for our attention, and what kind of a meeting it will be. (1.) There is a meeting of God in his ordinances. 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness.' Preparation for this consists in a proper sense of our wants; of the importance of what we are attending to; earnest breathings after God, and faith in the Divine promise. (2.) A meeting God in his judgments. (3.) A meeting of him at death: 'At an hour when ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.' This will be a meeting from which nothing can exempt us, neither youth, nor strength, nor beauty, nor wisdom, dignity, nor meanness: Eccles. viii. 8; a meeting to which mankind are called, at different ages, in childhood and in youth, as well as in advancing years, from the cottage and from the throne; it is often sudden and unexpected, *in an hour when we think not*: Eccles. ix. 12. Many warnings are given of it in the Divine Word, in the death of others, and in our own infirmities. Yet few, alas! think seriously of it: 'O that they were wise,' &c. It is a meeting which will put an end to our present state of existence, cut short our worldly purposes and projects: Ps. cxlvi. 4. It will be very different according to the state in which we are found; 'the wicked is driven away, but the righteous hath hope in his death.'



At Manchester (1790), Luke x. 42: 'One thing is needful.' Ackrington (1796), Psalm lxxviii. 18: 'Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.' Salendine Nook, Psalm lxxii: 'Men shall be blessed in him.' This sermon was considered as bearing a strong resemblance to some which had dropped from the lips of the Rev. Mr. Venn, and reminded many of those who heard it of what they had felt under his ministry. It was truly a season of sweet enjoyment, and refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

A publication, which came out in the year 1793, entitled "The Cross of Christ the Christian's Glory," was, at its first appearance, a circular letter. As containing a brief, yet comprehensive view, of the glories of the Gospel manifested in a crucified Saviour, it has

Finally, it will produce a surprising change in our souls and bodies; 'this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality.' (4) There will be a meeting with God at the last, the great day of judgment; this meeting is *certain* to take place; the justice of God and the express declaration of Scripture require it; it will be signalized by the most awful events. It will be a general meeting: 2 Cor. v. 10; 'We must *all* appear,' &c. A meeting of trial; a final meeting; it will therefore be most dreadful to many: Rev. i. 9; 'Behold he cometh with clouds,' &c. A meeting to which the views of good men are directed: 2 Cor. v. 9, 10; 'We labour that whether present,' &c. It will crown their best wishes, recompense their toils, vindicate their characters, finish salvation: 1 Pet. i. 9; reward their benefactors, and admit of no separation. II. Wherein a state of preparation for this meeting consists. In regeneration: John iii. 5: in repentance, faith, the pardon of sin and acceptance through Christ, a good conscience, in being dead to the world, having clear evidence of interest in Christ, and being found in a waiting posture. 'Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.' "



met with general acceptance. The ideas advanced by Maclaurin, in his celebrated treatise on the same subject, are here condensed into a small compass. It was one of those subjects on which the author felt himself in his element; it was the theme on which, of all others, he most delighted to dwell; not with the coldness of a mere speculatist, but with that holy fervour which inspired the Apostle, when he exclaimed, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' The sweet comment upon this passage, in Dr. Watts's Hymns, was particularly precious to him; and he could never repeat it without the strongest emotions:

"When I survey the wondrous cross," &c.

Several large impressions of the pamphlet on the Cross of Christ were printed by the author himself, and it is now gaining a more extended circulation, being one of the pieces distributed, and sold at a low price, by the British and Foreign Tract Society.

Of the many ordination sermons, which Mr. F. delivered, none was more impressive than that from our Saviour's words: 'He was a *burning and shining light*.' The former epithet he considered as descriptive of the feelings of the man in his personal character, and the latter of his exertions as a minister.

In the year 1784, the subject of this Memoir was solicited, by his landlord, to occupy another farm, in



addition to Brearley Hall; the ground being adjoining, and the buildings not far distant.

Though attended with some inconvenience, several circumstances pointed out the propriety of his compliance with this request; particularly the increase of his establishment, for which the lodging-rooms were inadequate, and the advance of his own family towards maturity. His personal feelings, also, as a studious character, were interested; this material addition to the premises affording him an opportunity of selecting a room more favourable for retirement than he had before. In all the changes of situation which took place in his pilgrimage on earth, some place of retreat from the crowd, where he could be surrounded by his books, his silent but beloved companions, was his favourite object.

A friend, who lived on the opposite side of the valley, where he could see the window of his study, often remarked, that whether he rose early in the morning, or from any cause had occasion to sit up later than usual at night, in the winter season, the light was generally, if not always, visible in his apartment. As often as the circumstances of the family would permit, he withdrew, during the day, from the bustle to his study; and, in the evening, he frequently repaired to the same place, after his pupils were retired to rest, seldom returning till the midnight hour. It is not improbable, that the exercise he was under the necessity of taking in passing between the houses, which were, at least, a quarter of a mile asunder, might be of some advantage to his health.

April 1, 1785, Mr. F. was deprived, by the stroke of death, of his eldest daughter, Sarah Fawcett. She was in her nineteenth year, and had shown an inclination to undertake the care of a number of young persons,



of her own sex, for which the steadiness of her conduct, her engaging disposition, and acquirements, well qualified her; but when the arrangements for that purpose were completed, with every prospect of success, her health began to decline; and after languishing for many months, and continuing in such a state that for weeks her death was daily expected, she at length left this world, like an expiring taper, almost without a sigh or a groan. She had a strong interest in his paternal affection; but he was enabled to bear this heavy trial with Christian patience and resignation: to this, the composure which she uniformly evinced greatly contributed. A letter, now before me, written by a dear friend, who was then an inmate in the family, feelingly describes the emotions of the afflicted parent, when anticipating the parting stroke, with the tender and pathetic petitions which he offered up, both in the family and at the bed-side of her who was about to be taken from him. The evening before her death, the family had assembled, as usual, to pray with her. She appeared more cheerful than for some time before; so that there being no apprehension that her end was so near, most of her relatives retired to rest. About midnight a change took place, which soon terminated in death. Though his own feelings were stronger than language could express, his first care was to communicate the intelligence, to those who were not present, in such a manner that the anguish of the parting stroke might be diminished, by pouring in the balm of consolation. He felt as a man, and as a parent; yet he did not sorrow as those who have no hope. It was, indeed, one leading trait in his character through life, that while incidents and disappointments, of a nature com-

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paratively trivial, sometimes unnecessarily perplexed his mind, and led him to draw gloomy conclusions; amidst overwhelming trials, the energies of his soul were called into exercise, and he evidenced, in an eminent degree, the composure and fortitude of the Christian.\*

\* The following extract of a letter, addressed to him on another occasion of severe domestic affliction, and written by one who was intimately acquainted both with his character and trials, is evidential both of the tenderest sympathy, and of the holy resignation, which he was enabled to exercise in the day of trouble.

" My dear, my invaluable friend, will believe that I feel the most affectionate solicitude, and that my earnest petitions have frequently been offered up for him, and his family, amidst present afflictions. Great God, thy judgments are inscrutable, and thy ways past finding out! yet mercy and compassion are attributes which thou dearest to exercise; and, therefore, in Thee will we yet hope. 'Light shall yet rise out of darkness, and the voice of joy and rejoicing be heard at the habitations of the just.' The Almighty will, ere long, fully vindicate his darkest dispensations; and we, who have wept and mourned together, shall unite in songs of praise; but, before this happy termination arrives, patience must have its perfect work, its fullest exercise. The great Author and Finisher of our faith was made perfect by sufferings; and it is by following his footsteps, that we shall be made partakers of the glory to be revealed. Much do I owe to you, my inestimable friend, for the advantage I have received, in time past, from your example, your instruction, and counsels; but the lessons I am now aiming to learn from you, surpass all that I have seen and admired before. That holy resignation, that composed submission to the will of Heaven, which you now exemplify, in the midst of these afflictive visitations, afford the noblest testimony to the truth of religion, and the most convincing proof of its Divine efficacy, that humanity can exhibit.

" Affliction is the good man's *shining* scene,

" Prosperity conceals his brightest ray.

" I do pray for you, that your faith fail not; but, alas! of how



The remains of her who was now taken from him lie at Hebdenbridge, with the following inscription on her tomb :

In memory

of

Sarah, Daughter of John Fawcett,  
of Brearley Hall,

who supported a lingering indisposition

with Christian patience,

and, in the cheerful prospect of Immortality,

departed this Life,

April 1, 1785.

“ If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” 1 Thes. iv. 14.

This long-continued and heavy domestic affliction was, as he intimates in many of his letters, still extant, of great service to him in the discharge of an important part of his ministerial office, to which he was frequently called ; namely, the visiting of young persons who were languishing under the power of flattering, but fatal disorders. He felt and evidenced the tenderest sympathy towards them, and by his correspondence (some parts of which will be hereafter introduced), and his personal interviews, he was happily instrumental in bringing

little avail can such powerless breathings be ! This idea often discourages me. Were I happily conscious of that purity of heart which is required to render prayer efficacious and acceptable in the sight of God, I could sometimes be more importunate ; yet, ‘ He will not break even the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.’ The great Intercessor pleads for you above ; his intercessions are of sovereign avail ; for ‘ Him the Father heareth always.’ Through Him grace and strength shall be imparted to support you in this conflict, fulfilling his own precious promise : ‘ I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.’



them to an acquaintance with Christ, and those all-important truths and promises which are the only real consolation of a dying bed.

It is thus that the afflictions of God's people become blessings in disguise, not only to themselves, but to all with whom they are connected.

The decease of Mr. F.'s daughter was the only instance of mortality, except in the case of an old domestic, which occurred in the family, for the space of more than thirty years. This will appear an extraordinary circumstance if the number of youths (often inattentive to their own personal safety) is considered, who, during this long period, were entrusted to his care. In one instance the interposition of Providence was strikingly manifested. Some unsuccessful attempts had been made to procure coal in the premises belonging to the seminary. A gentleman, who had formerly been a pupil, came over on a short visit; and from the recollection how much he had enjoyed an unexpected holiday, he solicited a similar indulgence for those now around him, whose youthful ardour rendered them alive to the same feelings. It was granted, on the express condition that they should not approach the dangerous place above-mentioned. Stimulated by curiosity, and by that propensity to enjoy forbidden pleasures so often seen in young persons, a number of them stole away, and after having looked into the pit, which was about ten yards in depth, and thrown a few small stones in, to hear the effect that would be produced, urged by conscious guilt, they made a precipitate retreat. One alone remained unobserved. who took up a stone which he could not properly wield, so that while attempting to throw it in, he was precipitated headlong to the bottom



of the pit, and pitched his head on the very stone which he had taken up. His companions soon missed him, and having given the alarm, a person was let down to him in the bottom of the pit. Though his skull was much fractured, so that a surgical operation was necessary, he soon recovered, and survived this accident many years.

At the time when the intelligence of this distressing event was brought to the ears of the master, he was pleasing himself, by employing the short interval of relaxation in fixing upon a situation, in the adjoining orchard, for the retired cell which has been mentioned before. Alas! how often are our visions of future enjoyment, even of the most innocent and rational kind, suddenly obscured by thick darkness and some unforeseen catastrophe!

In the year 1788, the "Essay on Anger" was published by subscription. The first idea of this work originated in a sermon delivered at one of the public meetings. The subject itself being rather uncommon, and the manner of discussing it adapted for general usefulness, he was repeatedly urged to commit his thoughts to the press, either as at first delivered, or in a more enlarged form; the latter of these appeared, on all accounts, more eligible. It is scarcely necessary to detail the contents of this work, as it has been pretty generally read and approved. It may, however be expected that something should be said relative to a circumstance which, though very contrary to the author's wishes, has been frequently mentioned. For the



British constitution, as a fabric which had been gradually reared by the wisdom of ages, he felt and uniformly evidenced great reverence. He had a particular attachment to the august Family seated on the throne, both on account of the extended privileges of a religious nature enjoyed under their mild administration, and the personal virtues of the reigning Sovereign, who was nearly coeval with himself. As it is a principle in human nature to desire that, where sincere and grateful sentiments of respect are felt, they should be communicated to the object of them, he embraced an opportunity, offered by the kindness of a friend, to present a copy of this small work, accompanied by a humble address expressive of his sentiments, to that venerable Personage. This he afterwards learned was graciously received, and perused with approbation. He was repeatedly induced, in conjunction with others, to solicit the exercise of royal clemency in mitigating the severity of that punishment which the law denounces; and it gladdened the sympathetic feelings of his heart to know that these petitions were not unavailing; but the modesty of his character made him often regret the publicity which had been given to this subject.—How mysterious, that the evening of life in one so distinguished by private virtues, and deeds of condescending benevolence, should be so beclouded, as to render him incapable of witnessing the joys and sorrows, or even knowing the grateful and sympathetic emotions, of his family and people!

In the year 1792, some time after the death of that excellent man, Dr. Caleb Evans, who had been no less eminent as an eloquent preacher than as a tutor, Mr. F. was invited, by the Bristol Education Society, to become President of the Bristol Academy. Alderman



Harris, and Thomas Ransford, Esq. were delegated by the society to wait upon him with the invitation. Much as he felt himself honoured by their intentions, his present attachments, his various engagements, and his advancing years, forbade a compliance. His habits of life were now fixed; those sentiments which had influenced his determination in his younger days, when invited to remove, were now become, if possible, still more deeply rooted; as many inducements of a temporal nature, through the blessing of Providence on his exertions, no longer existed. It was a matter of great satisfaction to him that the views of the society were subsequently directed to one so well calculated for discharging the duties of that important station.

Though the superintendence of a numerous family, ministerial exercises, and studies preparatory to them, engaged a principal part of Mr. F.'s attention, and could not leave much time for other pursuits, he showed, at this period of his life, all the assiduity which becomes the youthful inquirer, in enlarging his stores of general knowledge, and perusing those works, in the different departments of science, with which no language more abounds than the English. His own experience had taught him the advantage which the man, the Christian, and the minister, may derive from an increase of information on various subjects; for though 'the world by wisdom know not God,' though vain philosophy has at different periods obscured the lustre of Gospel light, and though the presumptuous ostentation



of some sciolists may have given occasion to the enemies of learning to speak evil of what they understand not; yet the diversified acquisitions of knowledge, if properly improved, are handmaidens of wisdom in the best and most important sense of the word. It is well known that learning and religion revived together. Erasmus, in many respects the most elegant scholar of his age, though he did not afterwards co-operate with Luther, yet by his attacks on the absurdities and abuses of the church of Rome, particularly the monastic institutions, afforded him indirectly the most important aid. Had Luther himself, and Calvin, with the rest of that intrepid band, been destitute of literary acquirements, they would have been ill qualified for that great work which they were instrumental in accomplishing. Destitute of learning, they could not, without the interposition of miracles, have been able to translate the Scriptures into the vernacular tongues, defend their doctrines, or repel the arguments of their subtle antagonists.

If we have never mounted the hills and traversed the valleys beyond our confined habitations, if we have never heard of empires and kingdoms of almost boundless extent, we may be ready to imagine that this world affords no excellence superior to our own, and that in traversing our narrow contracted circle, we know all that is necessary to be learned; but when we surpass our native boundaries, survey the population, manners, customs, &c. of other lands, and above all, when on looking upwards, we find that numberless worlds move in the immensity of space, all under the government of a Supreme Agent, we then indeed see our own nothingness, we are led to exclaim, 'What is man that thou art mindful of him!' and



"vanity confess." Thus it will be in exploring the vastly extended fields of science. If these objects are pursued under proper limitations, they cannot fail at once to promote humility, to inspire devotion, and to enlarge the soul.

For an illustration of this we may refer to the great Apostle Paul. He had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; and even a superficial attention to his writings must show, that though, after his conversion, he counted 'all things but loss and dung for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus,' and had the most humbling views of his own attainments; yet the advantages he had enjoyed of a literary nature, contributed, with the zeal and fervour of his mind, to give him a superiority over the other Apostles. On a comparison of his public discourses with those of Peter and James, we shall find that while the latter were plain and unornamented, such as the fishermen of Galilee under Divine inspiration (aided by the gift of tongues, which must now be acquired by study,) might be supposed to deliver, the former were often graced with all the charms of eloquence, and showed a mind well versed, not only in the manners and customs, but in the celebrated writings of past ages, and of the times in which he lived; to them he most pertinently alludes as illustrations of his subjects. Witness his dignified defence before King Agrippa, his sermon before the Athenian sages; and indeed all the specimens we have of his eloquence in the Acts of the Apostles, evince an acquaintance with the style of energetic oratory by which Greece had been so much distinguished. What would Doddridge and Watts, with others whose names might be mentioned, have been, in an intellectual point of view, without the aids



of science? They might in a narrow circle have edified those around them; but the permanent advantage now derived from their writings on diversified subjects, would have been lost, or rather never known. If in connexion with such names the deceased may be mentioned, the whole of his life was evidential of the sense he had of the importance of learning, and of the advantage to be derived from it.

As a relaxation from severer studies, he was uncommonly interested in the perusal of biographical accounts and historic records. The lives of eminent men, however minutely related, have always been found to excite the peculiar attention of those engaged in similar pursuits. They here see the difficulties which others had to encounter, the expedients by which they obviated them, and the success which ultimately crowned their efforts. Of the writings of the justly celebrated Dr. Johnson, he was extremely fond. The "Rambler" (a title by no means appropriate to the grave, philosophical essays which that valuable work contains) first engaged his attention, before he knew much of that author's rising celebrity. He afterwards perused the "Idler," "Rasselas," and the "Lives of the Poets," a work of inestimable value, both as recording in a pleasing manner the incidents which occurred in the biography of those whose names he enrols among the votaries of the Muses, and as a body of profound criticism; though it must be acknowledged that on some occasions his better judgment was biassed by those prejudices and that impetuosity of temper which cast a shade over his character. His "Journey to the Hebrides," written by himself, with Boswell's further account of that tour, and the minute account published by the same writer of Dr. Johnson's



"Life," often afforded rational amusement, in those hours when he was prevented by disease from attending to his regular avocations. Some time after the publication of this last mentioned work, he wrote a letter to Mr. Boswell, expressive of the pleasure and advantage he had derived from the Doctor's works, and his gratitude for Mr. Boswell's assiduity and perseverance in treasuring up his sage remarks, and relating the incidents of his life. Mr. Boswell, in a polite reply, enclosed, at his request, a specimen of the Doctor's hand-writing. He often lamented that a man who illustrated almost every subject on which he wrote with the most profound and judicious observations, had not clearer conceptions of the gospel system: the want of this, as is evident from his "Prayers" and "Meditations," threw a gloom, a morbid melancholy over his mind, and rendered the slow, but inevitable approach of death, often dismaying. Yet the many occasions in which he expresses, though with trembling apprehensions, his dependance on Divine mercy, connected with deep humility and earnest desires, encourage us to hope that the termination of his bodily afflictions was a happy release from sufferings of every kind. The faith of good men under the former dispensation was sometimes so weak, that 'through fear of death, they were all their life time subject to bondage;' and even under the present dispensation, the views and expressions of pious persons may be, in some measure, beclouded, though the principles essential to the Christian character may exist in the soul. This consideration should lead us to avoid those hasty conclusions as to the present characters and final condition of others, which our Divine Master so pointedly condemns.

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The sermons written by the Rev. Dr. Blair of Edinburgh, about this time, attracted the attention of the public, and for a succession of years were more generally read, especially among the higher ranks, than any other works of that description. Discourses of so much celebrity could not fail to engage the notice of one who had an insatiable avidity for reading, and who had devoted so considerable a portion of life to pulpit composition. While he was far from considering them as proper models for the imitation of him whose object it is (as it ought to be the aim of every minister of Christ) to alarm the secure conscience, and to call sinners to repentance; and while he regretted, as much as any could do, that more explicit declarations are not given of his views as to the way of salvation by Christ Jesus; he admired the perspicuity, good sense, and attractive graces of the writer, in discussing many practical subjects. The instructive lessons which may here be found, as to the regulation of the heart and government of the passions, the discharge of relative duties, &c. are such as no one can seriously attend to without being profited by them. For this reason he frequently selected some passages from these compositions for Sunday evening reading to his numerous charge.

It is well known to those who are acquainted with literary anecdotes, that the manuscript of the first volume of these sermons, when sent to London, with great difficulty met with a purchaser; but they were not long known, before the press could scarcely supply the increasing demand for that and the succeeding volumes. To those who have read them all, it is scarcely necessary to remark that a considerable degree of sameness is observable as to the matter and mode of illustration in



many of the latter volumes. The mind of the author was like an even flowing stream, which is beheld with pleasure, while it moves along in its noiseless bed, without any of those bold cataracts and roaring torrents which at once strike with surprise and admiration. We shall in vain look here for the glowing eloquence of a Massillon, a Bossuet, or a Saurin; or for the nervous reasoning of a Barrow or a Clarke. As a proof that Dr. Blair's views were far from being averse to the evangelical system, he wrote a warm eulogium\* on the ministerial character of his coadjutor Mr. Walker, prefixed to the first volume of his posthumous sermons. These discourses, which are justly held in high estimation, contain the most undisguised and unreserved avowal of his sentiments, as to the leading truths and doctrines of Christianity. They are remarkably animated and impressive, exhibiting in an energetic manner the glories of the Gospel, and its tendency to promote holiness of heart and life.

The course of lectures which Dr. Blair published towards the close of his life, was read with peculiar satis-

\* An extract may not be unacceptable to the reader. "With regard to Mr. Walker's public labours I need not say much to those who have so long had full proof of his talents, and experience of his assiduity and fidelity in the ministry of the Gospel. *There* indeed he appeared in his highest character, as an eminent and successful labourer in the Lord's vineyard. To this work his greatest application was bent. With this he allowed nothing else to interfere. By the elegance, neatness, and chaste simplicity of composition in his sermons, and by the uncommon grace and energy of his delivery, he rose to a high and justly acquired reputation. But mere reputation was not his object. He aimed at testifying the whole 'counsel of the grace of God;' at dividing rightly to every man the Word of truth, instructing the ignorant, awakening the careless, reproving the sinner, and comforting the saint."