

PART FOURTH.

PERSONAL DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS, OR THE DUTIES OF MEN TO THEMSELVES.

OUR duties to ourselves, well denominated by an English writer, "personal morality,"* may be comprised under seven divisions. I. The preservation of life and health, including a discussion of suicide. II. The improvement of the corporeal faculties. III. Cultivation of the powers of the mind generally, including discipline of the temper and passions, and attention to manners and personal habits. IV. Cultivation of a strong, delicate, and permanent sense of duty. V. Cultivating personal religion, and the personal virtues. VI. Cultivating a delicate sense of honor. VII. Guarding ourselves against prejudices, antipathies, prepossessions, &c.

CHAPTER I.

THE DUTY OF PRESERVING LIFE AND HEALTH, INCLUDING A DISCUSSION OF SUICIDE.

IF there is any difficulty in putting our duty to preserve life and health beyond all controversy, it arises from its being so plain, that there is no medium of proof by which to make it more manifest. The Christian religion looks upon all our capacities of improvement and usefulness, as so many talents intrusted to our administration, and for the use of which we are to be held responsible.† And that our life is the talent of superlative value,

* Estlin's Lectures on Moral Philosophy, No. VII.

† Matt. xxv. 14 - 30; Luke xix. 12 - 27.

when compared with all others committed to us, is a position too manifest to require illustration, much less, argument. Life and health, then, still more than the other talents which we enjoy, are to be regarded as treasures intrusted to our keeping by the Almighty, to be used for our own good and the good of our fellow-men.

By the duty of preserving life and health, therefore, I mean much more than abstaining from positive and known injury to either. Health may be ruined, and even life may be lost, by neglect as well as by positive injury. Not only so; a person may pursue a course, undeniably calculated to impair his health and shorten his life. Moreover, the duty to preserve life and health includes the duty of *using the means* of preserving them, such as temperance, exercise, cheerfulness of mind, and whatever else conduces to prolong life and preserve health. On this subject, I may quote the advice of Cicero, which seems to me to comprise the substance of entire volumes. "Health is preserved," says he, "by a knowledge of one's constitution (*notitiâ sui corporis*), and by observing what things and circumstances benefit, and what injure it, by temperance and moderation in meats and drinks, by forbearance and abstinence from hurtful pleasures and every kind of excess; and, when all these means fail, by the use of medicine and the skill of physicians.*

This duty, imperative on all men, to preserve life and health, and to use all the means known to conduce to this end, enables me to approach, with advantage, the discussion of the difficult and important subject of suicide, which was esteemed proper, lawful, and even heroic, by the ancient sect of the Stoics; and has sometimes been defended, as well as frequently practised, in modern times. Dr. Smith affirms, that the lawfulness and propriety of suicide was a doctrine common to *all the sects of ancient philosophers*; and he has ingeniously, if not satisfactorily, traced the prevalence of this doctrine among the Greeks, to the habitual state of public affairs in that country.† It is true that the case of Cato, called by Dr. Smith, "the venerable martyr of the republican party," was excused (not commended, as he

* De Officiis, Lib. II. c. 24. † Theory of Moral Sentiments, Vol. II. pp. 78-80.

says,) by Cicero himself, who, though substantially (*potissimum*) a Stoic in his moral principles, was manifestly against suicide generally.* Still it is matter of just regret, that this great philosopher should in any case, or in any degree, have given countenance to the crime of suicide.

Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, the most illustrious of all the philosophers of antiquity, not only gave no countenance to suicide, but gave their voice *decisively* against it. And this single fact must very much qualify, if it does not indeed destroy, Dr. Smith's assertion, that the lawfulness of suicide was a doctrine common to all the ancient sects. Indeed, I may well ask every man acquainted with ancient authors, and accustomed to form an estimate of ancient opinions, What is the ancient doctrine or opinion worth, against which Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle take their stand? Reinhard † has expanded, illustrated, and enforced the reasoning of Socrates and Plato against suicide, in the copious, lucid, and persuasive style in which he has treated so many other subjects, and has shown, that *the voice of philosophy and natural religion* give no countenance to, and make no apology for, this crime.

The New Testament nowhere contains a *positive prohibition* of suicide; and from this it has sometimes been supposed, that Christianity does not regard it as an offence against religion and morals. To this, various satisfactory replies may be given. If it is one of our highest duties to preserve life and health; to destroy life knowingly and intentionally must be highly criminal. Again; we are forbidden, under the most severe penalties, by the sacred writers, to take away the lives of others; — can it be other than a high offence, to take away our own? Moreover, an *implication* may be, under certain circumstances, scarcely less strong and conclusive than a *positive prohibition*; and the implication in regard to suicide is as strong and conclusive, as implication can in any case be.

Thus, human life is represented as a *term* appointed or pre-

* De Officiis, Lib. I. c. 2, 31.

† "De Morte Voluntariâ quid et quam clarè præcipiat Philosophia," contained in his "Opuscula Academica," Vol. I. pp. 67–92. See particularly, pp. 67, 73, 87, note.

scribed to us ; it is a race set before us, — it is our course, — it is a course to be finished, — to be finished with joy, — we have need of patience, that, after we have done the will of God, (that is, discharged the duties of life so long as God is pleased to continue us in it,) we may receive the promise.* This way of viewing human life, commended to us by St. Paul, seems to me as inconsistent as possible with the doctrine, that we are at liberty to determine the duration of our lives for ourselves. †

Again, Christ and his Apostles inculcate no quality so often or so earnestly, as *patience under affliction*. Now this virtue would have been, in a great measure, superseded, and the exhortations to its practice might have been spared, if the disciples of our Saviour had been at liberty to quit the world, as soon as they grew weary of the ill usage which they received in it. When the afflictions of life pressed severely upon them, they were exhorted to look forward to a “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” — they were to receive them as “chastenings of the Lord,” — as intimations of his care and love ; — by these and the like reflections and motives, they were to support and improve themselves under their sufferings ; but not a hint has escaped them, that they might seek relief in a voluntary death. One text, in particular, strongly combats all impatience under distress, of which that may be supposed the greatest which prompts to suicide, to wit, — “Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” ‡ On this text, it may be inquired, 1. Whether a Christian convert, who had been impelled by the continuance and severity of his sufferings to destroy his own life, would not have been thought by the author “to have been weary, to have fainted in his mind,” and to have disgraced the example, which is here proposed for the meditation of Christians when in distress ? 2. Whether such an act would not have been attended with all the circumstances of mitigation, which can excuse or extenuate suicide at this day ? §

Further, the *conduct* of the Apostles, and of the Christians of

* Hebrews xii. 1 ; 2 Timothy iv. 7 ; Acts xx. 24 ; Hebrews x. 36.

† Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, p. 227. ‡ Heb. xii. 3.

§ Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, p. 227, 228.

the Apostolic age, furnishes no obscure indication of their sentiments on this subject. They lived in a confirmed belief of happiness to be enjoyed by them in a future state. In this world every extremity of injury and distress was their allotment. To die was gain. The change, which death brought with it, was, in their expectation, infinitely beneficial. Yet it never, that we can find, entered into the mind of any one of them, to hasten this desirable change by an act of suicide, from which, it is difficult to say, what motive could have so universally restrained them, except a conviction of unlawfulness in the act.* It is, then, equally the sentiment of philosophy and of religion, both natural and revealed, — “All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.”†

We must be still further convinced of the unlawfulness and criminality of suicide, if we bring the practice to the further test of the *general consequences* which it involves.‡ Indeed, there is no subject in morals, to which the test of general consequences can be more successfully and properly applied. Particular and extreme cases of suicide may be imagined, and may arise, of which it would be difficult to assign the *particular mischief*, or from that consideration *alone*, to demonstrate the guilt; but this is no more than what is sometimes true of universally acknowledged vices. Possible cases, even of the highest crimes known to the law, might be proposed, which, if they could be detached from the general rule, and governed by their own particular consequences alone, it would be no easy undertaking to prove criminal.

When brought to this test, the question is no other than this; May every man who chooses to destroy his life, innocently do so? Limit and discriminate as we please, it will come at last to this question. For, shall we say, that we may commit suicide, when we find that our continuance in life has become *useless* to mankind? Any one may make himself useless, who pleases; and persons given to melancholy are apt to think themselves useless, when they really are not so. Suppose a law were enacted, allowing each individual to destroy every man he met, whose longer continuance in the world he might judge to be *useless*;

* Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, p. 228.

† Job xiv. 14.

‡ See above, pp. 33–37.

who would not condemn the latitude of such a rule? Who does not perceive, that it would, in substance, be a permission to commit murder at pleasure? A similar rule, regulating the right over our own lives, would be capable of the same abuse. Besides which, no one is *useless* for the purpose of this plea, but he who has lost every capacity and opportunity of being useful, together with the possibility of recovering any degree of either; — a state of such utter destitution and despair, as cannot, I presume, be affirmed of any man living.

Again, shall we say, that to depart from life voluntarily, is lawful for those alone, who leave none behind them to lament their death? If this consideration is to be admitted at all, the subject of inquiry will be, not whether there are any to lament us, but whether their pain, caused by our death, will exceed that which we should suffer by continuing to live. Now this is a comparison of things so indeterminate in their nature, so capable of varying judgments, and concerning which the judgment will differ so much according to the state of the spirits, or the pressure of any present anxiety, that it would scarcely vary, in hypochondriacal constitutions, from an unqualified license to commit suicide, whenever the distresses, which men felt or fancied, rose high enough to overcome the pain and dread of death. Men are never tempted to destroy themselves but when under the oppression of some grievous uneasiness; — the restrictions of the rule, therefore, ought to apply to these cases. But what effect can we expect from a rule, which proposes to weigh one pain against another; the misery that is felt, against that which is only conceived; and in so false a balance, too, as the party's own distempered imagination.

In like manner, whatever other rule we assign, it will ultimately bring us to an indiscriminate toleration of suicide, in all cases in which there is danger of its being committed. What then would be the consequence of such toleration? Manifestly, the loss of many lives to the community, of which some might be valuable; the affliction of many families, and the apprehension of all; for mankind must live in continual apprehension for the fate of their friends and dearest relatives, when the restraints of religion and morality are withdrawn; when every disgust, which is

powerful enough to tempt men to suicide, shall be deemed good cause to justify it, and when the follies and vices, as well as the inevitable calamities of life, so often make existence a burthen.

Besides the reasons against suicide derived from philosophy and natural religion, from Christianity, and from the general consequences, each case will be aggravated by its own proper and particular consequences ; by the duties that are deserted ; by the claims that are defrauded ; by the loss, affliction, or disgrace, which our death, or the manner of it, causes our family, kindred, or friends ; by the occasion we give to many to suspect the sincerity of our moral and religious professions, and, together with ours, those of all others ; by the reproach we draw upon our order, sect, or calling ; finally, by a great variety of evil consequences attending upon peculiar situations, with some or other of which every actual case of suicide is chargeable.

Besides these more general motives, fitted to dissuade from suicide, one, more particular, may be addressed to all who are tempted in this way. By continuing in the world, and in the practice of those virtues which remain within our power, we retain the opportunity of meliorating our condition in a future state. And there is no condition in human life, which is not capable of some virtue, active or passive. Even piety and resignation under the sufferings to which we are called, testify a trust and acquiescence in the divine counsels more acceptable, perhaps, than the most prostrate devotion ; afford an edifying example to all who observe them ; and may hope for a recompense among the most arduous of human virtues. These qualities are always in the power of the miserable ; indeed, of none but the miserable.*

Legislation has been resorted to, both in this country and in England, to prevent suicide ; but without any good effect. If the love of life, so natural to man, the prohibitions of Christianity, the restraints of public opinion, the general consequences and particular aggravations of every act of this kind, and the other motives to which I have adverted, are not effectual to prevent suicide, — it is in vain to rely on any enactments of penal law, however severe these may be. The offending party is beyond

* Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, pp. 223 - 226.

the reach of legal penalties; the confiscation of his estate is punishing the innocent for the offence of the guilty, and any indignities offered to his remains, will only render his relations, already made unhappy by his conduct, still more unhappy. When moral considerations have failed, legal penalties will be ineffectual.

CHAPTER II.

IMPROVEMENT OF THE CORPOREAL FACULTIES.

ANOTHER personal duty consists in the preservation and improvement of our corporeal faculties. On the importance of physical education, which chiefly consists in skilfully calling forth the corporeal powers, strengthening and maturing them by healthful exercise and appropriate training, and bringing them to all attainable perfection, I have before briefly remarked.*

The personal qualities, and consequently the usefulness and happiness of the man, depend, in no small degree, on the strength, vigor, elasticity, and general good constitution of the body, on the flexibility and good proportional developement of the limbs, and on its ability to resist exposure, to sustain fatigue, and endure labor and privation of every kind. And such is the reciprocal action of the body and the mind on each other, that whatever affects the one, must in a greater or less degree affect the other. Moreover, a good constitution of body, and high improvement of the corporeal powers, the result of a judicious and persevering physical education, can be *maintained* only by a continuance of the same salutary exercise and discipline. An eminent Roman author well says,

"Orandum est, ut sit mens sana in corpore sano.

Fortem posce animum, et mortis terrore carentem,

Qui spatium vitæ extremum inter munera ponat

Naturæ, qui ferre queat quoscumque labores,

Nesciat irasci, cupiat nihil, et potiores

Herculis ærumnas credat, sævosque labores,

Et Venere, et cœnis, et plumâ Sardanapali."†

* See above, pp. 149, 150.

† Juvenal. Sat. X. 356 - 362.

A sound mind in a sound body, — a mind proof against passion, however violent, and inaccessible to degrading pleasures, however enticing, and a body able to bear any labors, however arduous, — is the perfection of the physical and intellectual man. Finally, physical accomplishments are intimately connected with moral, as well as intellectual; and, for this reason again, it is still more a personal duty to aim at the utmost physical improvement of which we are capable.

CHAPTER III.

CULTIVATION OF THE POWERS OF THE MIND.

It is, then, a duty to cultivate and, if possible, to perfect our physical powers. But it is a still higher duty to cultivate the faculties of the mind generally; and, in this cultivation, we are to include the discipline of the temper and passions, and attention to manners and personal habits.

The intellectual and moral faculties are the chief prerogative by which man is distinguished, and are the most valuable blessings conferred on him by the Almighty. In their natural state, however, *they are capabilities of reflection and usefulness*, rather than faculties actually in exercise. In too many cases, they continue substantially in this state, through life. In every case, they wait to be called forth by cultivation and discipline. By neglect, by disuse, by sloth, they remain unawakened and unimproved. Even when awakened and cultivated, vice and profligacy waste, corrupt, and ruin them. Extremely feeble in infancy, these powers, under wise and judicious cultivation and discipline, are susceptible of almost indefinite improvement. Some aid may be given towards improving them, by instruction, and by the advice, suggestions, encouragements, and example of others; and still more by the *direction* which others are frequently instrumental in giving them; but, with slight qualifications, all mental cultivation and excellence, of whatever kind, are the fruit of the personal sacrifices, efforts, and energy of the individual.

The most skilful and persevering instructor can do little more than give his pupils an opportunity of learning ; their actual advancement must depend on the diligence and efforts, which they are willing to use. This is true of all mental cultivation, intellectual, social, and moral. Parents, instructors, and other friends may do something ; but any well-marked, and especially any unusual success, must come from the personal endeavours of the individual. It may be added, for the encouragement of those who are willing to make the trial, that, wherever the wish for mental improvement has been sincere, decisive, and persevering, inspired with enthusiasm to attain the end in view, prepared to make sacrifices and submit to self-denial with cheerfulness, such wish has not often been destined to disappointment.

We shall see most distinctly the importance of the duty of cultivating the mental powers, and the rewards which wait on its successful performance, if we estimate it by the effects with which it has sometimes been crowned. Not to ascend higher than comparatively late times, — Lord Bacon, after spending much of his life in active pursuits, viewed human knowledge in all its dimensions, marked its errors and defects, and pointed out the path to its renovation and extension. Newton's views and conclusions were coextensive with the material universe ; his sublime genius excluded confusion and disorder from all the dominions of the Almighty, and proved that they are all resplendent with the elements of beauty, grandeur, and sublimity. Locke ascended to the sources of thought and reflection, and subjected the senses, powers, and faculties of the understanding to the most acute, comprehensive, and searching analysis. At the present day, no man can expect to be highly useful or successful, whose mental faculties have not been carefully disciplined and fully invigorated and matured.

Nor does this discipline and improvement, which I am attempting to illustrate, refer to the understanding alone ; it embraces equally the temper, the passions, the affections, the habits, and the manners. These all refer to the mind, and are equally capable of cultivation. The various faculties of our nature, too, should be cultivated in due proportion, harmony, and consistency with each other. "There is no profession or pursuit," says

Dugald Stewart, "which has not habits peculiar to itself; and which does not leave some powers of the mind dormant, while it exercises and improves the rest. If we wish, therefore, to cultivate the mind to the extent of its capacity, we must not rest satisfied with that employment which its faculties receive from our particular situation in life. A variety of exercises is necessary to preserve the animal frame in vigor and beauty; and a variety of those occupations which literature and science afford, added to a promiscuous intercourse with the world, in the habits of conversation and business, is no less necessary for the improvement of the understanding." Again he says, "It ought not to be the leading object of any one to become an eminent metaphysician, mathematician, or poet; but to render himself happy as an individual, and an agreeable, a respectable, and a useful member of society. A man who loses his sight, improves the sensibility of his touch; but who would consent, for such a recompense, to part with the pleasures which he receives from the eye?" *

So far as the acquisition of knowledge is concerned, it seems to have been the settled conviction, probably from time immemorial, that it is attainable by a very few only, — that it can be expected to be attained only by men who have studied long in halls devoted to learning, by professional men, and persons of fortune and leisure, — and that it is not in the power of the humbler classes of society, especially of those who subsist upon manual labor and mechanical industry, to engage in the pursuit of it with any reasonable hope of success. The Son of Sirach has spoken the general sentiments, which men of every age and country seem to have been accustomed to entertain on this subject. He says, in his beautifully simple style, "The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure; and he that hath little business shall become wise. How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, and that glorieth in the goad, that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labors, and whose talk is of bullocks? He giveth his mind to make furrows; and is diligent to give the kine fodder. So every carpenter and workmaster,

* Elements of the Philosophy of the Mind, Vol. I. pp. 18-20.

that laboreth night and day ; and they that cut and grave seals, and are diligent to make great variety, and give themselves to counterfeit imagery, and watch to finish a work. The smith, also, sitting by the anvil, and considering the iron work, the vapor of the fire wasteth his flesh, and he fighteth with the heat of the furnace ; the noise of the hammer and the anvil is ever in his ears, and his eyes look still upon the pattern of the thing that he maketh ; he setteth his mind to finish his work, and watcheth to polish it perfectly. So doth the potter, sitting at his work, and turning the wheel about with his feet, who is always carefully set at his work, and maketh all his work by number ; he fashioneth the clay with his arm, and boweth down his strength before his feet ; he applieth himself to lead it over ; and he is diligent to make clean the furnace. All these trust to their hands, and every one is wise in his work. Without these cannot a city be inhabited ; and they shall not dwell where they will, nor go up and down ; they shall not be sought for in public council, nor sit high in the congregation ; they shall not sit on the judges' seat, nor understand the sentence of judgment ; they cannot declare justice and judgment ; and they shall not be found where parables are spoken." *

This graphic description of the condition of the laboring classes, and of their inability to attain knowledge and enjoy its benefits, is strictly true as applied to *ancient* times ; but, so far as it regards modern times, since the invention of printing, and the facilities which it has introduced for acquiring knowledge, it must be received with much qualification. It has been made known by the experience of later times, and it is one of the most gratifying results, which the people of any age have witnessed, that high mental improvement is capable of much greater extension, than was ever supposed, or even conjectured, prior to such experience. The object is, to improve the mind and enlarge its capacities by the acquisition of knowledge. Now MIND is the inheritance with which God has endowed all the children of the great family of man ; it cannot, therefore, be monopolized by any class of society. It is a treasure, which, beyond an equal

* Ecclesiasticus xxxviii. 24 - 33.

proportion, is not given to the children of the wealthy ; it is a talent bestowed alike on all, whatever may be their external condition. Nor is this all : MIND is in all men, and in every man, the same active, living, creative, immortal principle, — it is the man himself. A renowned philosopher of antiquity beautifully said of the intellectual faculties, — “ I call them not *mine* but *me*.” These make the man ; these are the man.

I am too well convinced of the immense value of the various seminaries of learning in our country, which public and private liberality has founded, not to estimate them as highly as any man. They cannot well be estimated too highly ; — they have contributed beyond measure, to the respectability, honor, and welfare of the country, in the highest and best sense of these terms. Still it may be affirmed, with perfect truth, of the great benefactors of mankind, — of the men, who, by wonderful inventions, remarkable discoveries, and extraordinary improvements, have conferred the most eminent service on their fellow-men, and gained the highest renown in history, — by far the greater part have been of humble origin, small advantages, and self-taught. To rouse the understanding to a consciousness of its own powers ; to kindle, nourish, and invigorate its capacities, in order that it may learn to compare, to contrive, to invent, to improve, and to perfect, is the spring of all valuable improvement, and is within the reach of every man, without distinction of birth or fortune. In this great respect, then, the most important that touches the condition of man, we are all substantially equal. It is not more true, that all men possess the same natural senses and organs, than that their minds are originally endowed with the like capacities of improvement, though not probably all in the same degree.

As men bring with them into life, like intellectual endowments, that is, minds susceptible of like, if not equal improvement, — so, in a country like ours, the means of personal improvement are much more equally enjoyed, than might be supposed at first sight. Whoever has learned to read, possesses the keys of knowledge ; and can, whenever he pleases, not only unlock the portals of her temple, but penetrate to the inmost halls and most secret cabinets. A few dollars, the surplus of the earnings of the humblest industry, are enough to purchase the use of books, which contain the

elements of the entire circle of useful knowledge. If it be said, that a considerable part of the community have not time to give to the cultivation of their minds, a satisfactory reply is not difficult. It is only necessary to make the experiment, to ascertain two things, — the one, how much useful knowledge can be acquired in a moderate time ; — and again, how much time can, by good management, be spared from the busiest day. As a general fact, our duties leave us time enough, if our passions would spare it to us ; our labors are much less pressing in their calls upon us, than our indolence and our pleasures. There are very few pursuits in life, whose duties are so unremitting, that they do not leave some time every day to a man, whose temperate and regular habits allow him the comfort of a clear head and cheerful temper, in the intervals of business. Besides, there is one day in seven, which is redeemed to us, by our blessed religion, from the ordinary calls and avocations of life, and affords all men a reasonable portion of time for the improvement of their rational and immortal natures.

It is a mistake to suppose, that any class of men have much time to spend, or do actually spend much time, in mere contemplation and solitary study. A small number of men, professedly literary, habitually do this ; but the very great majority of professional men, — lawyers, physicians, and clergymen, men in public stations, rich capitalists, merchants, — men, in short, who are often supposed to possess eminent advantages and ample leisure to cultivate their minds, are all very much occupied with the duties of life, and constantly and actively employed in pursuits very uncongenial to the cultivation of the mind, and the attainment of useful knowledge.

We may take for illustration, the case of a distinguished lawyer in full practice at the bar. He passes his days in his office, giving advice to clients, often on the most uninteresting and paltry details of private business, or in attending, in court, to the same kind of business ; and, when it is night, and he returns to his home fatigued and harassed ; instead of sitting down to read or to rest, he is compelled to study another perplexed cause for the next day, or to go before referees, or to attend a political meeting, where he is expected to make a speech ; — while every moment,

which can be regarded, in any degree, as leisure time, is consumed by a burthensome correspondence. Besides all this, he has his family to take care of, as well as other men. It is plain, that he has no more leisure for the liberal cultivation of his mind, independent of his immediate profession, than if he had been employed the same number of hours in mechanical or manual labor. One of the most common complaints of professional men, in all the professions, is, that they have no time for reading; and it may well be believed, that there are many such, of very respectable standing, who do not, in any branch of knowledge unconnected with their immediate professions, read the value of an octavo volume in the course of a season.*

This subject will receive still further illustration, if I briefly advert to a few individuals, who, from the most adverse influences of birth and fortune, have risen to the highest eminence of useful distinction. The story of Demosthenes, and the extraordinary obstacles, of almost every kind, which he overcame on his way to distinction, — ill health, obscure origin, defective utterance, and prominent personal infirmities, are known not only to every classical scholar, but to every reader of general history and biography.

“Quem mirabantur Athenæ
Torrentem, et pleni moderantem fœna theatri.”†

Cicero, too,‡ won the distinction which he acquired, by his love of knowledge, his courage, his industry, his self-denial, and his perseverance. Cato, the celebrated Roman censor, learned the Greek language when very far advanced in life. To come, however, at once to late times, with which we shall, perhaps, have more sympathy, — Laplace, the celebrated French mathematician and physical astronomer, who, in these sciences, unquestionably ranks next to Sir Isaac Newton, was the son of a farmer in Normandy. The celebrated German metaphysician, Kant, was the son of a harness-maker, who lived in the suburbs

* At least, such is the opinion of one so well qualified to judge as Mr. Edward Everett, the present Governor of Massachusetts, expressed in his Franklin Lecture, delivered at Boston, 14th November, 1831, to which several paragraphs of this chapter are considerably indebted.

† Juvenal, Sat. X. 127.

‡ Called by Juvenal, “novus Arpinas ignobilis,” Sat. VIII. 237.

of his native city, Königsberg. Heyne, the celebrated classical scholar and editor, in the Memoirs of his own life, says, — “Want was the earliest companion of my childhood. I well remember the painful impressions made on my mind by witnessing the distress of my mother, when without food for her children.” The father of Sir Humphrey Davy pursued the employment of a carver, at Penzance, in Cornwall, and from this humble origin, the son became the most renowned and successful chemist of the present century. Vauquelin, the celebrated French chemist, was apprenticed to an apothecary, and acquired the Latin language by tearing the leaves from an old dictionary, and always having some of them in his hand, when traversing the streets with medicines, and executing other commissions in his master’s service. These examples are fitted to give an impulse to the energies of those who are most industrious and most enterprising. When we look into the lives of such men, the cause of their success is no longer a secret to us; we cease to be surprised at the distinctions which they won. When we observe the series of struggles, which they endured amidst poverty, obscurity, and neglect, their disciplined passions, their love of knowledge, their firmness of purpose, and their unconquerable zeal and perseverance, we perceive, that their success has followed in the train of their exertions by the ordinary law of cause and effect.

But it is not necessary to resort to *foreign* sources to illustrate the importance of cultivating the faculties of the mind, and the rewards which wait on such cultivation. The history of no nation on earth more abounds with instructive examples of this kind than our own. The circumstances under which the celebrated Roger Sherman rose to eminence and distinguished usefulness, have been noticed in another connexion.* David Rittenhouse was entirely self-taught in mechanics. When he took up the business of a mathematical instrument and clock maker, he made many implements of his trade with his own hands. From the age of nineteen to twenty-five, he applied himself unremittingly to his trade and his studies, devoting the day to the former, and

* See above, p. 228.

much of the night to the latter. Samuel Huntington was engaged in the labors of the farm, until his twenty-second year, when he commenced the study of the law, and rose to be a distinguished member of Congress, and was chief justice of the Supreme Court, and chief magistrate of his native State (Connecticut), during many years. Dr. Thomas Baldwin may be said to have commenced the education which fitted him for his distinguished course of usefulness in the Christian ministry, when he was thirty-eight years of age. If propriety permitted me to use the names of persons still living, many other examples equally striking and instructive might be cited. But, of all examples, that of Dr. Franklin is probably the most instructive and cheering to those, whose humble circumstances require them to be the architects of their own fortunes. His father was accustomed to quote this verse of the Proverbs of Solomon; "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings;"* and the Memoirs of the son warrant us in believing, that it had a decisive influence on his aspiring genius. Born in the lowest obscurity, his industry and enterprise raised him to be the companion and adviser of kings. Lord Chatham said, he was "one, whom all Europe held in estimation for his knowledge and wisdom, and ranked with Boyle and Newton; who was an honor, not to the English nation only, but to human nature."†

But why review the cases of individuals any further? Our entire country is a great and striking illustration of what may be done by native force of mind, self-education, without advantages, but springing up under strong excitement, and embarking in new and successful undertakings. Nowhere do we meet with examples more numerous and more brilliant, of men who have risen above poverty, obscurity, and every other discouragement, to usefulness and an honorable fame. The statesmen who conducted the revolution to its successful issue, were called, generally without experience, to the head of affairs. The generals who commanded our armies, were most of them taken, like Cincinnatus, from the plough; and the forces which they led, were gathered from the firesides of an industrious and peaceable population. They were arrayed against all the experience, talent,

* Chap. xxii. 29.

† Franklin's Works, Vol. I. pp. 85, 322.

and resources of the older world, and came off victorious. They have handed down to us a country and a constitution, and have put us upon a national career, affording boundless prospects to every citizen, and calling every individual to do for himself, what our fathers unitedly did for the country. What young man can start in life, with so few advantages, as our country started with, in the race of independence? Over whose private prospects, can there hang a cloud so dark as that which brooded over the cause of colonial British America? Who can have less to encourage, and more to appal and discourage him, than the sages and chieftains of the revolution? Let our young men, then, endeavour to walk in their path, and each, according to his means and ability, try to imitate their illustrious example, despising difficulties, grasping at opportunities, and steadily pursuing some honest and manly aim. They will soon find, that the obstacles which oppose their progress, sink into the dust before a firm and resolute step; and that the pleasures and benefits of knowledge are within the reach of all, who seek this invaluable treasure. In these observations, however, on the cultivation of the mind, I of course do not mean to say, that the condition, in which persons are placed, is a matter of indifference. This would be going much too far. Unquestionably there are limits, beyond which, the doctrine I have laid down and attempted to illustrate, does not apply. There are circumstances of birth and general condition, against the adverse influence of which, children, who are affected by them, cannot be expected, comparatively often, to make their way.

There are two classes of persons, in particular, whose children are called, in the providence of God, to overcome special obstacles to mental cultivation; and whose situation, in this respect, may be made the just subject of still further remark;—the very wealthy;

“*cuncta exsuperans patrimonia census,
Quanto Delphinis balena Britannica major;*”

and those who are either paupers, or are but just above the depths of pauperism,

“*quorum virtutibus obstat,
Res angusta domi.*” *

* Juvenal. X. 13. Idem, III. 164.

The situation of both these classes is unfavorable to mental culture, and it is not certain, which of them has the greatest difficulties to surmount. The means of the poor man are extremely scanty; he is beset with many discouragements, if not with despair; and he habitually feels, that mental cultivation is, in his case, unattainable. Still many, immersed in the depths of poverty, have broken through all its difficulties and discouragements. On the other hand, the love of ease, amusement, and pleasure, — indolence with its seductions and fascinations, — gaming with its excitements, — fashion with its frivolities, — pride, vanity, and ostentation, beset the children of the very wealthy, on their way to improvement, virtue, eminence, and usefulness.

CHAPTER IV.

CULTIVATION OF A STRONG, DELICATE, AND PERMANENT SENSE OF DUTY.

EVERY man owes it to himself to cultivate a strong, delicate, and permanent sense of duty. The general importance of acting uniformly on this principle has been so earnestly insisted on before,* that I need not do much more than simply advert to it in this connexion.

A sense of duty is the helm by which we are to guide our course; nothing can or will supply the want of it. A good temper, a general good intention, a general disposition to do right, will not supply its place. It is something more than either or all of these. They approach it, they resemble it, they constitute a *part* of it. Still it is something more than all of them. Firmness and perseverance are among its constituent parts, and obstinacy and self-will are among the counterfeits of it, by which men are most apt to impose on others, and even on themselves. Without being governed by a sense of duty, the individual will be prompted by caprice, by passion, by preju-

* See above, pp. 11-14.

dice, by antipathy, by the seductions of pleasure, by the recklessness of false honor, by the aspirations of a criminal ambition, or by whatever other feeling, humor, impulse, or principle, may happen for the moment to have the ascendancy.

The being governed by a sense of duty embraces a suitable regard to every consideration, principle, sentiment, opinion, relation, fact, and circumstance from which any duty, of whatever kind, can spring. The requirements of Scripture, the law of the land, regard for consequences, propriety, (which, as Lord Kames well says, is not left to our own choice; but, like justice, is required at our hands; and, like justice, is enforced by natural rewards and punishments,)* decency, delicacy, — every thing which can give rise to a duty, however small, is acknowledged to have a claim to attention and regard.

CHAPTER V.

THE DUTY OF CULTIVATING PERSONAL RELIGION AND THE PERSONAL VIRTUES.

A SACRED writer, one whose experience in human affairs was perhaps unexampled, says, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and, with all thy getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee."† This language is as beautiful, as the sentiments are persuasive, valuable, and authoritative. Besides the sacred Scriptures, the duty of cultivating personal religion might be argued and illustrated from several sources. But, neglecting every other, I shall confine

* Elements of Criticism, Vol. I. p. 272.

† Proverbs iii. 5-7; iv. 7-9.

myself to the practical beneficial effect produced by personal religion on the entire character of the man. And to this end, I shall use the sentiments, and avail myself of the experience, of several individuals distinguished in more than one walk of life, in preference to my own.

Lord Chatham, in advising his nephew (Thomas Pitt) while at the University of Cambridge, writes thus ; — “ I come now to the point of the advice I have to offer you, which most nearly concerns your welfare, and upon which every good and honorable purpose of your life will assuredly turn. I mean the keeping up in your heart the true sentiments of religion. If you are not right towards God, you can never be so towards man ; the noblest sentiment of the human breast is here brought to the test.” Again he says, “ ‘ Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth,’ is big with the deepest wisdom ; ‘ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; and an upright heart, that is understanding.’ This,” continues he, “ is eternally true.” “ Hold fast, therefore, by this sheet-anchor of happiness, religion ; you will often want it in the times of most danger, the storms and tempests of life. Cherish true religion as precious, as you will fly, with abhorrence and contempt, superstition and enthusiasm. The first is the perfection and glory of human nature ; the two last, the depravation and disgrace of it. Remember,” he concludes, “ the essence of religion is, a heart void of offence towards God and man ; not subtile speculative opinions, but an active vital principle of faith.” * Another statesman says, “ The individuals, the communities, that are penetrated with a truly religious spirit, and exercise the moral qualities which flow from that source only, regularly prosper. They inherit the earth. Those that pursue a different course, as regularly dwindle into nothing and disappear.” †

Again, the most accomplished and successful chemist of the present century says, “ I envy no quality of the mind or intellect in others ; not genius, power, wit, or fancy ; but, if I could choose what would be most delightful, and, I believe, most useful to me, I should prefer a firm religious belief to every other blessing ;

* Letters to his Nephew, at Cambridge, Letter IV.

† Speech of Alexander H. Everett in the Senate of Massachusetts, 1833.

for it makes life a discipline of goodness, creates new hopes when all earthly hopes vanish, and throws over the decay, the destruction of existence, the most gorgeous of all lights ; awakens life even in death, and from corruption and decay calls up beauty and divinity." Again he says, "Religion, whether natural or revealed, has always the same beneficial influence on the mind. In youth, in health and prosperity, it awakens feelings of gratitude and sublime love, and purifies at the same time that it exalts ; but it is in misfortune, in sickness, in age, that its effects are most truly and beneficially felt ; when submission in faith, and humble trust in the divine will, from duties become pleasures, undecaying sources of consolation ; then it creates powers which were believed to be extinct, and gives a freshness to the mind which was supposed to have passed away for ever, but which is now renovated as an immortal hope. Its influence outlives all earthly enjoyments, and becomes stronger as the organs decay and the frame dissolves ; it appears as that evening star of light in the horizon of life, which, we are sure, is to become in another season a morning star, and it throws its radiance through the gloom and shadow of death." * Such are the sentiments, and such the result of the experience and reflection, of men of the most cultivated understandings, and of the most enlarged acquaintance with human affairs.

The impression so generally prevailing, that sound religious sentiment is a matter of comparative indifference, or, at most, of inconsiderable importance, is one of the besetting sins and errors of the age and times in which we live. In ancient times, religious belief was regulated by enactments of the legislature, and enforced by the civil magistrate ; and a man's faith, still more than his practice, was decided upon and adjusted by the tribunals of criminal jurisdiction. In those times, a man's religious faith was imposed on him as imperatively as the law, which prescribed his civil duties, or which regulated the title by which he held his estate. No one can wish for the return of those times, and, if their return was possible, every good man must deprecate their approach as one of the greatest possible calamities. But, by the

* *Consolations in Travel, or the Last Days of a Philosopher*, by Sir Humphrey Davy, pp. 23, 206.

sacrifices of blood and treasure made by our ancestors to establish religious freedom and the free profession of religious faith, they never intended to sanction, much less encourage, an utter indifference to all religion. Religious freedom differed, in the view of our fathers, as widely from indifference to religion, as civil freedom differs from universal license and anarchy.

Nor, in permitting each individual to form his religious sentiments without restraint and without responsibility to other men, did they intend to divest him of that responsibility to his conscience and his God, which springs from the nature of this most important of all subjects, and from which, (that is, personal and individual responsibility,) as he cannot divest himself, so no power on earth can divest him.

In securing, too, perfect religious freedom for all men, our institutions impose a personal and individual responsibility on every man, which is, in a great measure, unknown in regard to every other subject. The law of the land is prescribed to us by our legislatures, and is authoritatively declared to us by our tribunals of justice. For the law of the land, therefore, no man is individually responsible, otherwise than as a member of the community to which he belongs. To aid in the management of the *civil* affairs of the citizens, the law has provided legal advisers, and has rendered them responsible for the advice which they give. So also the physician is made legally responsible for the safety of his patient. But the law prescribes his religion to no man, nor is his spiritual adviser made responsible for his advice. In this respect, our institutions have departed from their usual policy, and have charged every man with the full, undivided, and unqualified responsibility of securing his own salvation. I have thought it useful to illustrate this personal responsibility, which rests on every American citizen, in regard to his religious sentiments and character, and his destiny beyond the grave, because I am convinced that it is not always well understood.*

The personal virtues are to be cultivated in connexion with personal religion, and as its natural fruit and genuine offspring. It is probable, indeed, that the personal virtues have been culti-

* See an Address delivered by the author to the Graduates of the College of Charleston, at the Commencement of 1835, pp. 12-14.

vated in every age, in a greater or less degree, in connexion with religion, natural or revealed, and under its influence. This may be distinctly seen in many passages of the writings of the ancient philosophers ; but it may be still more distinctly seen in a numerous class of Christian writings.

The importance of self-examination, to ensure any considerable progress, either in intellectual or moral improvement, has always been understood, and the New Testament enjoins this as a special Christian duty. Accordingly pious Christians have, at all times, made it their special care to cultivate the peculiar virtues of our religion, on a plan, of which self-examination has made an essential part. Many such plans have been committed to writing by their authors, and have had merit enough, in the opinion of their friends, to justify their publication after their death. We have them under the form of private journals, in which is an entry, from day to day, of the feelings, trials, temptations, failings, encouragements, obstacles, backslidings, and advances of the authors, in pursuing the Christian life, all detailed with the utmost sincerity, and apparently without any reserve. Or they consist of sets of resolutions, cautions, and admonitions, pertaining to the author's personal state, condition, and prospects, and designed to be reviewed occasionally or at stated seasons.* Many of these are instructive, especially in this point of view, that they make us acquainted with the most private thoughts of their authors in their most private hours, when they were entirely withdrawn from the gaze and influence of men. Some of them are of very great value, and almost all of them contain unquestionable internal proof of their utility in enabling their authors to attain a standard of piety and virtue, which without their aid they, in all probability, would never have reached.

But the most curious and interesting document of this kind, which, as far as I know, exists, is a plan devised and practised upon during many years by the celebrated Dr. Franklin, of which

* The most valuable resolutions of this kind known to the author, are those of President Jonathan Edwards, which have often been published, and may be seen, probably, in any edition of his Works. They were written in early life, and manifestly contributed much to the formation of his moral and religious character.

he has given minute details, in the curious and instructive autobiography which he has left behind him. It is well known, that in early life he "conceived the bold and arduous project," as he well calls it, of arriving at moral perfection; he wished "to live without committing any fault at any time, and to conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead him into." He did not exclude religion from his scheme, (in truth, it acknowledges "God as the fountain of wisdom," and contains his religious creed, and a form of prayer for the divine assistance and guidance,) but it contained no distinguishing tenets of any particular sect; as he was persuaded, he says, that it might be serviceable to people of all religions, and he was unwilling to have it contain any thing which might prejudice any one of any sect against it. He gives a very full and candid account of the means and effects which he used to attain his end. He admits, that he was not entirely successful, but says, it contributed very much to the improvement of his morals.* As one of the means of attaining his end, he made a list of the virtues which he wished perfectly to acquire, on which he carefully and frequently examined himself. Under the circumstances, his list and arrangement of the virtues is, in some respects, instructive. The plan is commendable and worthy of imitation, and, on the basis of sound views of Christianity, and a deep sense of personal religion, could not fail to be generally and very highly useful.

Many of the virtues respect others chiefly, rather than ourselves;—these are not personal virtues, as I make use of the phrase. Justice, for instance, respects the rights of others chiefly. Of the virtues, more especially personal, Dr. Franklin enumerates temperance, order, frugality, industry, moderation, cleanliness, tranquillity, chastity, and humility. This enumeration is very incomplete;—it admits of many additions, among which independence of mind, dignity, self-respect, firmness, consistency, evenness, cheerfulness, and sociability of temper, must, upon the slightest reflection, occur to every one.

Temperance, as Dr. Franklin well observes, tends to procure that coolness and clearness of head, which are so necessary,

* Franklin's Works, Vol. I. pp. 88-98.

where constant vigilance is to be kept up, and a guard maintained against the unremitting "attraction of ancient habits," and the force of perpetual temptations. To this he ascribed his long-continued health and his good constitution. To frugality and industry, he ascribed "the early easiness" and independence of his circumstances, the acquisition of fortune and affluence, with all that knowledge which enabled him to be a useful citizen, and obtained for him the high reputation which he enjoyed among the learned. He was extremely sensible of the value of a habit of order and method, by which "all his things might have their places, and each part of his business might have its time," and he used the greatest exertions to acquire it. He was better satisfied with the fruit of his endeavours to acquire the other virtues, than with the result of those which he made to acquire this, to which he says he had not been accustomed from the outset of life, and with his progress in which he always seems to have been very much dissatisfied. He set himself to acquire humility, in consequence of being kindly informed by a friend, that his pride showed itself frequently in his conversation; that he was not content with being in the right, when discussing any point, but was overbearing, and rather given to insolence. To the joint influence of the virtues, even in the imperfect state in which, he says, he was able to acquire them, he was accustomed to ascribe all that evenness of temper, and that cheerfulness in conversation, which made his company sought for, at a very advanced age, and agreeable even to his young acquaintances.* In respect to moderation, discipline of temper, and love of peace, he does not seem to have failed much of that perfection at which he aimed. His moral practice seems to have been more perfect, than his list of virtues is complete. The cardinal virtues, which he so assiduously cultivated, drew within their influence and attraction those, which are kindred to them, and which his enumeration does not contain. On various trying occasions, and under all becoming circumstances, he showed himself not wanting in firmness, self-respect, dignity, and independence of mind.

Few men, too, have been more popular; but he used no un-

* Franklin's Works, Vol. I. pp. 90, 94 - 96.

worthy arts to acquire popularity. It is scarcely going too far, in this particular, to apply to him, all that Lord Mansfield claimed for himself. "I wish for popularity;" said that great jurist, "but it is that popularity which follows, not that which is run after. It is that popularity, which sooner or later, never fails to do justice to the pursuit of noble ends by noble means. I will not do that which my conscience tells me is wrong upon this occasion, to gain the huzzas of thousands, or the daily praise of all the papers which come from the press. I will not avoid doing that which I think is right, though it should draw on me the whole artillery of libels, all that falsehood and malice can invent, or the credulity of a deluded populace can swallow. I can say," continues he, "with another great magistrate, upon an occasion and under circumstances not unlike, *Ego hoc animo semper fui, ut invidiam virtute partam, gloriam, non invidiam, putarem.*"* In thus adverting to the life of Dr. Franklin, to illustrate the duty of cultivating the personal virtues, I am justified, if not so much by the practice of modern writers, yet by the great writers of antiquity, with whom this was a favorite mode of illustration. It is in this way, that Cicero and Seneca have illustrated the moral doctrines and principles which they taught, by availing themselves of the acts, habits, traits of character, and example, not only of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, but of Cato, Fabius, Lælius, Scipio, and a host of other patriots and statesmen whose names adorn the Roman history. †

* Quoted in Story's "Miscellaneous Writings," p. 415.

† Dr. Franklin had it in mind, during many years, to write and publish a work on practical morals; and he was only prevented from executing his intention by the pressure of his private business, in the earlier part of his life, and, later in life, by public business. He proposed to entitle it, "*The Art of Virtue*, because," says he, "it would have shown the means and manner of obtaining virtue, which would have distinguished it from the mere exhortation to be good, that does not instruct and indicate the means." It was his design to explain and enforce this doctrine, "that vicious actions are not hurtful, because they are forbidden, but forbidden because they are hurtful, the nature of man alone considered; that it was, therefore, the interest of every one to be virtuous, who wished to be happy, even in this world;" and, from this circumstance, it was further his intention to "endeavour to convince young persons, that no qualities are so likely to make a poor man's fortune as those of probity and integrity." (Franklin's Works, Vol. I. pp. 96, 97.) It must be admitted, that Dr. Franklin's morals were by far too exclusively *utilitarian* in their character, and his intend-

In cultivating the personal virtues, no one thing is more indispensable to success, than the government of the temper and passions ; among which jealousy, envy, anger, and its offspring, resentment, hatred, malice, and revenge, are the most dangerous. These passions are accustomed to disturb society enough ; but still more will they disturb and harass, if they do not destroy, the unfortunate individual, who gives way to them.

The malignant affection, with which some ill-constituted minds are ever disposed to view those whom they consider as competitors, is called *jealousy*, when the competitor is one who has not yet attained the height on which themselves stand, and when it is the future advancement of a competitor that is dreaded. It is denominated *envy*, when it regards some actual attainment of another. But the passion, varying with this mere difference of the present and the future, is the same in every other respect. In both cases, the wish is a wish of evil, — a wish of evil to excellence of whatever kind. “ Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous ; but who is able to stand before envy ? ” * There are minds, to which no scene of torture is half so dreadful, no pain half so exquisite, no sight half so disgusting, as superior virtue, excellence, and happiness. The envious man will wish all mankind to remain in ignorance of important truths, if the most important truths, that can be revealed to them, are to be the discovery of any other genius than his own. He will sigh over the relief which multitudes are to receive from the institutions of a wise benevolence, which *he* was not the first to prompt. He will sicken at the prosperity of his country, if this prosperity is made to enhance the glory of a rival. He will rejoice at the severest calamities which can afflict his country, if they can be turned to the disgrace, and much more to the ruin of a rival.

One change, however, would, in a moment, dissipate all the malevolence of this gloomy and selfish spirit. It would only be necessary to drive from the earth, every thing worthy of love and

ed work would have been, no doubt, strongly characteristic of his peculiar way of thinking on this subject. This work, too, is mentioned more than once in his correspondence with Lord Kames, in which he explains it further ; but his explanation is too long to permit me to quote it. (Life of Lord Kames, by Lord Woodhouselee, Vol. I. p. 372 ; Vol. II. p. 28.)

* Proverbs xxvii. 4.

approbation,—to make wisdom folly, kindness cruelty, heroic generosity sordid selfishness, and all the qualities, which raise admiration, the execration and disgust of mankind. The hatred of the envious might cease, where the hatred of the virtuous might begin. But the wishes of evil, which flow from such a breast, are still more evil to the breast which feels them, than to the excellence and happiness they are so willing to destroy. Hence it has been said of envy, paradoxically, that “it is at once the justest of passions, and the most unjust,”—the most unjust, in the wrongs which it is ever conceiving or perpetrating against him who is its object; the justest, in the punishment with which it is ever avenging on the envious man, the wrongs of which he has been guilty. This self-consuming misery of envy, is what happens to every envious man. He may, perhaps, overthrow his rival’s glory, but he will be crushed, like the rival of Theagenes, beneath the glory which he overturns.*

Nor do the more impulsive and vindictive passions of anger, and its kindred, malice and revenge, less impair personal excellence and happiness, than the malevolent passions, of which jealousy and envy are the chief. “Anger,” says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, “hath in it the trouble of sorrow, and the heats of lust, and the disease of revenge, and the boilings of a fever, and the rashness of precipitancy, and the disturbance of persecution.”† “There is such a resemblance,” says Seneca, “betwixt the transports of anger and those of madness, that it is not easy to know the one from the other. A bold, fierce, and threatening countenance, as pale as ashes, and in the same moment as red as blood; a glaring eye, a wrinkled brow, violent motions, the hands restless and perpetually in action, wringing and menacing, snapping of the joints, stamping with the feet, the hair standing, trembling lips, a forced and squeaking voice, the speech false and broken, deep and frequent sighs, and ghastly looks; the veins swell, the heart pants, the knees knock, with a hundred dismal accidents that are common to both distempers.”‡

“Make no friendship,” says a sacred writer, “with an angry

* Brown’s *Philosophy of the Mind*, Vol. III. pp. 112–115.

† Works, Vol. I. p. 89.

‡ *Morals*, p. 269.

man ; for wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous. He that hath no rule over his own spirit, (i. e. does not command his temper,) is like a city that is broken down and without walls. An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression." *

Such is a specimen of the infirmities of temper, and the out-breakings of passion, which are accustomed to impair and obscure personal excellence. They are introduced as illustrative of this part of my subject ; but it is grateful to me, that any further notice of personal infirmities of any kind is uncalled for ; as it would be alike an irksome and an unprofitable labor.

Moreover, I am warranted in saying, on the ground of Scripture and experience, that the cultivation of personal religion, and of the personal virtues, contributes essentially to health, length of days, and success in the business of life. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. Length of days is in her right hand ; and in her left hand riches and honor." † It is probable, that this sentiment might be brought to the test of positive proof and actual experiment, by an extensive inquiry into the lives of individuals, especially into the lives of those whose biography we possess minutely and circumstantially written. Such an inductive examination my time and avocations have not permitted me to make ; but two specimens of testimony on this point have fallen in my way, which are so decisive and valuable, that I should do wrong to omit citing them.

A gentleman, educated at one of our most distinguished colleges, has furnished this statement respecting the class to which he belonged, not more than thirty years since. "It was a class," says he, "from which much was expected, as the instructors were often heard to declare, and was certainly not deficient, when compared with other classes, either as to numbers or talents. Unhappily a very low *standard of morals* was prevalent ; only two of the class were free from the habit of profane swearing, and nearly all, except these two, would occasionally get intoxicated. This class went out into the world as one of the

* Proverbs xxii. 24 ; xxvii. 4 ; xxv. 28 ; xxix. 22.

† Proverbs iii. 13, 16.

hopes of the country. Comparatively, a small number of them ever occupied respectable and conspicuous situations. In *twenty-two years* after leaving college, *two thirds* of that class were known to have died; and, of these, full one half died the victims of intemperance; of the survivors, some now living are known to be in the lowest state of degradation." Another individual has given the character and history of another class, which was graduated less than forty years since. "It was numerous," says he; "the influence was decidedly in favor of morality. Before leaving college, a large proportion came under the power of religious principle, in consequence of a general revival of religion. *Twenty-five years* after the time of graduation, only *one quarter* of the class had died; and, of the surviving three quarters, a large proportion were occupying stations of considerable usefulness."

These statements are highly instructive; and it would be well, if others, in imitation of these gentlemen, would furnish direct testimony of the same kind, in regard to the connexion between early moral and religious character, and subsequent success in the business of life. The entire subject of such a connexion is worth a careful investigation. No persons are so well qualified to furnish the requisite information, as the aged graduates of our colleges. The reason of this is plain. No persons are so well acquainted with the real characters of each other, as those who have been associated in the relation of classmates at our colleges, in the gay and fresh season of youth, when mankind are not accustomed to disguise their motives, feelings, intentions, and principles.*

* See an Address delivered by the Author before the Euphradian Society of the College of Charleston, October 3d, 1833; p. 21.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DUTY OF CULTIVATING A DELICATE SENSE OF HONOR.

EVERY man owes it to himself to cultivate a delicate sense of honor. This might have been included in the former division, as one of the personal virtues ; but it is so frequently misunderstood, and withal so important, that I shall give it a distinct illustration.

When subjected to analysis, true honor is found to consist of the finest elements of feeling, of sentiment, and of action. It comprises delicacy of sentiment, manly spirit, and high courage, physical, and especially moral. The slightest touch of the base, the mean, the vulgar, and the false, is contamination and abomination in its sight. But I may well spare myself labor on this point, and avail myself of Cicero's analysis of honor (*honestum*), which, though made nearly two thousand years ago, still stands unrivalled. It is built, he says, on the superior nature and original excellence of man ; no animal having the slightest pretensions to claim such excellence. Indeed, he considers it synonymous with personal excellence of the most exalted kind. One of its ingredients is, the enlarged acquisition of knowledge on the most valuable and difficult subjects of inquiry. Purity, sincerity, integrity, and truth enter largely into its composition. It comprises a desire of influence, greatness of mind, and elevation of feeling above the usual estimate, tide, and course of human affairs. Still it acknowledges obedience to all just and lawful authority, of whatever kind, when justly and rightfully exercised. It admits and respects the claims of all duties, domestic, social, and patriotic, in their fullest measure. The observance of order, consistency, decorum, grace, dignity, and the most perfect propriety in all our sayings and doings, are among the particulars of which it consists. It is not insensible, too, to a nice and exact perception of the beautiful, the grand, and the sublime, in nature, and in human sentiments, actions, and character. It shrinks

from the approach of every thing impure, unmanly, and unbecoming in feeling, sentiment, and action. Of all these particulars is honor made up,* according to Cicero's analysis, — the *beau idéal* of every excellence, and imperishable in its claims to universal regard.† All the strict sects of ancient philosophers regarded it as the chief good (*summum bonum*), and the most considerable of them (the Stoics) regarded it as the only good.‡ And it was by expanding this *beau idéal* of human excellence in all its details, § that the great Roman moralist produced the work, which has ever since continued to instruct the successive generations of mankind.

This fine sense of personal honor, then, this combination of the rarest excellences of character, cannot well be too highly prized, or too carefully cultivated. It is to be cultivated in connexion with the other personal virtues of which it is the crowning glory (if indeed it does not include all of them), and more especially in connexion with the graces of personal religion, from which, as their root, they all ought to grow.

But, in the order of divine Providence, the best things and the best principles are productive of the very worst consequences, when they are misunderstood, perverted, or otherwise abused. This is preëminently the case with honor. Misunderstood and perverted, this quality, so enchanting, so delightful, and so valuable, changes its nature and becomes false honor, — quick, jealous, selfish, vindictive, knowing no law, human or divine, and in its wrath not sparing even the companion of its youth and the friend of its bosom, but seeking vengeance on its victim in a practice (duelling), which has been truly called the relic of a barbarous age, an excrescence, which has fastened itself on the system of modern manners, and, entrenched in public opinion, has defied the efforts of legislatures, of courts of justice, of courts of honor, and of extensive associations of patriotic individuals, themselves (*par excellence*) honorable men, combined for the explicit purpose of employing their influence and their

* "Quibus ex rebus conflatum et efficitur id, quod quærimus, honestum," says Cicero, *De Officiis*, Lib. I. c. 4.

† Ibid.

‡ Idem, c. 2, note; Pearce's edition.

§ Particularly in Book I.

example to bring it into disrepute. It is no proof of courage ; many a man has been driven to the field of honor, falsely so called, for want of courage to refuse. A refusal to sanction this practice by resorting to it, is no proof of cowardice, — for not a few have refused to resort to it, who have not refused to meet death at the cannon's mouth ; to whom fear, in the way of their duty, was a feeling unknown ; who have dared to do right, be the consequences what they might, — who have respected the law of God and the law of their country more than an irresponsible public opinion, — who have feared nothing but what was base, mean, and false, — who have embraced the sentiment of the greatest of our dramatic poets, when he says,

"I dare do all that may become a man ;
Who dares do more, is none."

It was a practice equally unknown to the manly Romans, those high-spirited conquerors of the world ; and to the polished Greeks, those originators of the arts and sciences, in which they have been the instructors of all succeeding nations.

Such, as I have illustrated it, is the genuine meaning of honor ; such was the understanding of antiquity ; such is the analysis of Cicero ; — a combination of the highest personal excellences, to which human nature can, under the best culture, attain.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DUTY OF GUARDING OURSELVES AGAINST PREJUDICES, ANTIPATHIES, &c.

It is a personal duty to guard ourselves against prejudices, antipathies, and prepossessions, which will lead us astray from the path of duty, truth, and even an enlightened self-interest. Prejudice, prepossession, bias, aversion, antipathy, are all terms expressive of an habitual state of feeling, that is, passion, under various shades, modifications, and degrees. The effect of them all is, to disturb the reason, to cloud and darken the understanding, and to pervert the conscience. Consequently, the evidence

by which our opinions, sentiments, and conduct ought to be governed, is greatly obscured, and makes but slight impression. They all imply something wrong in our habits, education, ways of thinking, or usual state of feeling. In their more intense degrees, they are unquestionably criminal, — frequently they are highly so. Many of them are contracted very early in life ; but all of them are injurious, and it is our duty to divest ourselves of them as far as possible.

“ In such a state of society,” says Dugald Stewart, “ as that in which we live, the prejudices of a moral, political, and religious nature, which we imbibe in early life, are so various, and, at the same time, so intimately blended with the belief we entertain of the most sacred and important truths, that a great part of the life of a philosopher must necessarily be devoted, not so much to the acquisition of new knowledge, as to unlearn the errors, to which he had been taught to give an implicit assent, before the dawn of reason and reflection. And, unless he submit in this manner to bring all his opinions to the test of a severe examination, his ingenuity and his learning, instead of enlightening the world, will only enable him to give an additional currency, and an additional authority, to established errors. To attempt such a struggle against early prejudices, is, indeed, the professed aim of all philosophers ; but how few are to be found, who have force of mind sufficient for accomplishing their object ; and who, in freeing themselves from one set of errors, do not allow themselves to be carried away with another ? To succeed in it completely, Lord Bacon seems to have thought to be more than can well be expected from human frailty.”* If then we are responsible for our opinions, sentiments, feelings, and conduct ; if it is important for us to have the conscience unperverted, the reason undisturbed, and the understanding unclouded ; — it is a high personal duty to guard ourselves against these classes and modifications of our feelings, and, as far as possible, to divest ourselves of their influence.

But the subject admits of a more particular illustration. The old man is dissatisfied with every thing around him, seizes every

* *Philosophy of the Mind*, Vol. I. p. 28.

occasion, like Nestor, to praise the times that are past, and insists that every thing has changed for the worse since he was a young man. It is all the effect of prejudice. Youth is a season of joy and delight, the sensibilities are active, the affections warm, the imagination buoyant and creative, all the powers of body and mind are fresh and elastic, want and anxiety have not begun to distress us, — and, more than all, hope sheds its bright illusions on our path, and gilds all our prospects with its rays. No wonder, then, that the reminiscences of youth are, as age advances, extremely pleasant, and that the old man believes every thing has changed, since he was young, for the worse ; when, in truth, the essential change has been in himself.

Again, we have prejudices in favor of our country, its institutions, and even its customs and fashions. A just attachment to our native country and its institutions is an important duty ; but this is quite different from a blind and bigoted attachment to every thing of native origin and growth, and is quite consistent with a liberal feeling and enlightened judgment respecting foreign countries, their inhabitants, and their institutions. Such prejudices often do much mischief. They are seen in the feelings, opinions, and sentiments, which the English, French, Spaniards, Italians, and Germans mutually entertain for one another. The existence of such feelings cannot be denied, and their influence in perplexing our judgments of men and things is extensively felt. There is great diversity among nations in respect to fashions of dress, and forms of civility and polite intercourse ; and these are the subject of many prejudices. Unless they encroach upon health, morals, religion, or something else involving considerations of moral duty, they are essentially a matter of indifference, and every wise man, wherever he is, will pay a suitable respect to them. They form no reason why one nation, or one age, should ridicule and despise another, or arrogate to itself any superiority over another. Custom and fashion have a rightful jurisdiction in things which nature has left indifferent ; but in every particular that can be denominated *proper or improper, right or wrong*, the *principle of duty* takes precedence of every other ; custom and fashion have little authority, and ought to have none.*

* Kames's Elements of Criticism, Chap. XIV. pp. 130, 131.

Besides these, there are professional prejudices ; and what may be termed prejudices of authority. Men often adopt unsound opinions, merely because they are proposed by writers of great celebrity. The writings of Aristotle had such authority in Europe, during many centuries, that nothing more was necessary to sustain any opinion or sentiment, than to cite them in its favor. There are, too, prejudices arising from personal friendship and dislike. But, of all the classes of prejudices which may blind and mislead us, none more require to be understood by every good man, that he may guard against their influence, than those which spring from sects and parties. There are parties in science, in politics, in religion, and on every other subject involving important interests. The spirit which animates all parties and all sects, although it differs much in intensity and virulence according to circumstances, is still essentially the same. It is not many centuries, since the controversies between the philosophical sects of the Realists and Nominalists ran so high, that the parties, after a public disputation of some days' continuance between their respective champions, drew themselves up in battle array, and an abstract metaphysical discussion was terminated by the use of fists, clubs, and swords, — by the killing of some and the wounding of many. The virulence of political prejudice and antipathy is too familiar to us all, to require more than a single illustration. "Political charity," says Gouverneur Morris, "is puss's velvet paw, soft so long as she purrs with pleasure ; but, let the meanest little mouse of an opposite party peep at the veriest paring of an office, away jumps the cat, her claws extended, her eyes flashing fire." * It is due to the subject of religious party prejudice to say, that the bitterness, with which its controversies were once waged, has been greatly softened, as public opinion has become enlightened, as knowledge has advanced, and as the claims of toleration and Christian charity have been more generally understood and acknowledged. Most religious controversies are now conducted with a degree of moderation, decorum, and good temper, well becoming their sacred subject.

* Life and Correspondence, by J. Sparks, Vol. III. p. 305.

Probably most persons can recollect the history of prejudice in their own minds. They can remember, when their favorable opinions of men and things did not extend beyond their own neighbourhood, parish, or city. The distant parts of even their own State were believed to be far inferior, in all respects, to those in which they had their birth and education. The inhabitants of other, and especially far distant States, were supposed to be far less moral, respectable, and estimable, than those of their own State. The inhabitants of all foreign countries were considered little better than semi-barbarians. As they have advanced in life, however, and become more acquainted with men and things, these prejudices have gradually vanished, and upon actual acquaintance, the people of distant States, cities, and countries, have been found to be very much like those of the neighbourhood or city, which was the original scene of their observations and attachments. In like manner, the superiority which we claim for the times in which we live, over times long since gone by, is, in great part, founded in prejudice.