

impartial reflection may enable us to ascertain the general character of this elapsed portion of our time. It cannot have been stationary. Has it been progressive or retrograde? During this period, the character of every reader has received an impress for weal or woe. Education for eternity has been going on. The reader may have been learning what, if he is, or ever becomes, a disciple of the Lord Jesus, he must unlearn; lessons inconsistent with meekness and lowliness of heart. On the other hand, he may have been gaining acquisitions of this heavenly treasure, this wisdom better than rubies. Of such acquisitions death cannot deprive us. They constitute our preparation for eternity, and accompany us thither.

It may be reasonably hoped, that a year has not elapsed without adding a little to the self-knowledge of those who already *have*; "for to him that hath shall be given." We may have had frequent and painful consciousness, that "in us, that is in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." That "ugly thing, self," may have been exhibited to us stripped of its disguises. Our spiritual penury, as well as pollution, may have become palpable, at least to ourselves. We may have been startled to think how we have yielded to the soft breath of the flatterer, whispering of an unreal plenty and a fancied strength. Aroused from such dreams, has it been to "call upon our God," to renew our faith in the atonement, and to cultivate a greater tenderness for those whose infirmities and miseries we share? "Let no man think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." It will cost us, however, very little in labour, and, if we terminate our contemplations here, very little in self-complacency, to pass the most emphatic condemna-

tion upon the evil of our hearts. Let us spend a moment or two in the review of our conduct. The gospel presents us with a doctrine and a discipline, a rule of faith and a rule of life: it teaches "what man is to believe concerning God, and what duties God requires of man;" and the two things are interwoven, and to attempt their separation is to destroy the utility of both. The Scriptures are intended, amongst other things, for instruction in righteousness, that we may be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." How clearly and boldly drawn is the inspired portraiture of the good man. "Not self-willed, not soon angry, a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate." The reader may have ceased to make resolutions; but, if a Christian, he has learned increasingly the value of prayer. The past year may have exhibited errors of conduct, bearing perhaps somewhat heavily upon the endurance of others, adapted to grieve the Holy Spirit, and injurious to ourselves. Is not the present season auspicious for imploring grace to put away the evil of our doings?

Let us, however, take a somewhat wider range. A year will not have elapsed without bringing under our notice, many affecting instances of the uncertainty and consequent vanity of human hopes. One awful dispensation after another may have reiterated in our ears the ancient oracle: All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof—rank, wealth, learning, bodily vigour—as the flower of the field. None can keep alive his own soul, much less redeem his brother. We stay not to inquire the feelings, to which such a review must give rise in the bosom of a benevolent man, if such there be, who, rejecting Christianity, rejects all celestial consolation. It is our privilege to contemplate the ruins of humanity, not in the pale