

subject of his merciless cruelty. Here, then, was mischief, mischief peculiarly aggravated, mischief coolly and deliberately, and without any apparent provocation, practised upon parties incapable of resistance or defence, and which their very character and condition might have in other circumstances mitigated or altogether prevented.

Doeg, though an Edomite, was yet a Jewish proselyte and an observer of the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion. He had but lately returned from the services of the tabernacle at Nob, the city of the priests, but from the expression used, regarded him in 1st Samuel xxi., 21, 7, it would appear, that these services had been to him, either irksome or rather protracted, by the peculiar nature of the sins for which atonement was sought. "He was detained before the Lord," which is peculiarly expressive and significant either of the manner or of the period of his religious observances. It implies, either that he reluctantly engaged in their services, that they were contrary to his mind, adverse to his disposition; or that he was wearied of their continuance, in his case possibly extended by aggravated guilt or the peculiar circumstances of his condition as a proselyte. Still he maintained a religious profession. He was not unacquainted with the claims of religion, or with the respect due to its ministers. He had himself but recently appeared before the Lord in the aspect and attitude of a worshipper. He had himself, submitted to the ministrations of these very priests of the Lord, whom he now so cruelly and so unceremoniously slaughtered. He must, however, have all along been a stranger to God and to vital godliness. His proselytism to the Jewish religion must have only been, for worldly interest or advantage. This worship must have only been the cloak or covering of a corrupt heart, otherwise like the other servants of Saul, he would have stood abashed and awed at the daring deed which his own perfidy had provoked Saul to command, and which was now executed by his own hands.

But a still more melancholy feature of this person's character, is implied in his boasting himself in his mischief. The mischief itself, already described, was of no ordinary kind. It consisted in deliberate falsehood, and in cool and indiscriminate murder, of which sacred persons were the immediate objects, but in which their connections of all classes and ages were involved. To exult in such mischief, to be proud of such iniquities and evil performances, to glory in being their agent, to boast in being their perpetrator, exhibits a depth of degeneracy, a hardened perverseness of spirit, that cannot be contemplated without horror. And yet, such was the character of Doeg; such was his melancholy condition; such was the advance in wickedness to which he had been brought. He had added cruelty to falsehood, and though both in themselves peculiarly aggravated, yet here he appears in a still more degrading aspect of glorying in

his shame. Instead of feeling remorse for perfidy so base, and cruelty so inveterate; instead of loathing himself for crimes so great, debasing and disastrous; instead of exhibiting repentance and seeking for mercy, he is represented in the page of inspiration, as boasting himself in mischief. Oh! how devoid must that mind be of all true perception of right and wrong, that could thus approve of falsehood and of crime! How hardened must that heart have been through the deceitfulness of sin, which could feel any self-satisfying emotions, in the consciousness of such iniquities! Boasting oneself in mischief, is in every case most deeply deplorable, but in the case of aggravated transgressors, whose punishment must bear a proportion to their crimes and whose possibility of repentance is almost hopeless, it appears so awful and affecting as to justify the inquiry, if such characters do exist.

In the case of Doeg, there can be no doubt of deception, and many, whose religious proof like his, has been altogether hypocritical, have from age to age appeared, in all the hideousness of their apostate character and in all the hopelessness of amendment which boasting betokens. There are many, whom, like Doeg, worldly interest has constrained to make a proof of religion, who are yet unsound and unsanctified in mind and heart. There are men ever ready to be false accusers and persecutors as opportunity may present; to seek power or receive promotion by any means of fraud or of violence. There are many regardless alike of honor and honesty, of truth and integrity, of piety and justice, who would trample upon all that is sacred and salutary among men, so that they may accomplish their own ends and obtain their own desires. Doeg is not an isolated character in the annals of mankind; there are many who resemble him, even in the blackest feature which he exhibited. Many in civil authority who malign and persecute the professed servants of the Lord, many in sacred stations, who bring false and railing accusations against their brethren, and who smite with a deceitful tongue and slay with all-devouring words, whose words are smoother than butter, but war is in their hearts, softer than oil, but drawn swords, Psalm lv., 21., the most upright and useful among men; yea, there are many who boast of their impious career, who glory in their perfidious and cruel schemes, who make no secret of their rejoicing in their malicious and mischievous attempts to injure the reputation and prevent the promotion, yea, compass the destruction of such as may differ from them, and whom in consequence they may dislike or disesteem, because they will not pander to their pride, covetousness or ambition. In the councils of Christian nations, there has been many a Doeg to whisper calumny, and compass the overthrow of the advocate of true religion; and in the courts and congregations of Christian churches, there have been many like Doeg, deceitful, and despicable, crafty and