

resident in Constantinople have a cemetery which covers a space of several hundred acres. It is planted with picturesque trees, and to it the living often repair for meditation on death, and for the affectionate recollection of deceased friends. It is a striking evidence, says the narrator, of the extent of the charity of these Armenian Christians, that, at the angles of the tomb-stones, there are various little cavities, which are intended as so many reservoirs to retain the rain-water for the use of the birds which abound in the trees of the cemetery, and frequently perish from the want of water in that sandy soil. Thus friendly are solitude and sorrow to pity and benevolence.

The arguments by which this godly retirement may be recommended are various. Retirement, by its seclusion from the temptations and the bustle of life, gives opportunities for obtaining that acquaintance with our state and character, without which no repentance can be felt, and no amendment will be sought. It is here that the voice of flattery is silent. Conscience tells us what we are before God; and amidst its charges, from which we cannot withdraw, the atonement of Christ is felt to be our only refuge. I remember to have heard, says Dr. Doddridge, of a wise man, who, on his dying bed, addressed himself to his eldest son, who was a very licentious youth, and entreated him that he would promise as a man of honour, that he would spend one quarter of an hour every day alone, without the amusements of books or paper, employing himself for that time only in thought. So easy a request was not to be denied to a dying parent, nor could the youth himself immediately forget it; and while thus alone, it soon occurred to him to reflect, to what purpose it was that so wise a man as his father should make what seemed to him to be so odd a request; but so near does wisdom dwell to a heart disposed to inquire after it, that a set of thoughts soon arose in his mind, which proved not only the occasion of his reformation, but of his conversion too.

Occasional solitude is necessary to recruit the faculty, and to compose the feelings. Quietly is the vigour of that mind exhausted which is perpetually

on the stretch to dazzle, and whose passions are continually agitated by the conflicts of the world. Soon does that beauty fade, and that sprightliness pass away, which move incessantly in the scene of gaiety. But intervals of seclusion repair the waste of time, and render the intercourse of society more pleasing. That man enjoys the advantages of friendship with far more profit and delight, who has obeyed the call of wisdom to retirement, and has been listening to her still small voice, than he can who is always in public. The finest talents must be purified by private discipline, and cherished by seasonable respites, or they will soon run into the extravagancies of vain conceit, or sink into the languor of utter imbecility. We have many illustrations of such lessons from the works of nature around us. The loveliest flowers would soon wither and die under perpetual sunshine, and therefore night covers them with its shade, and then refreshes them with dew.

Solitude, too, is friendly to our intellectual and religious improvement; there we have it in our power to converse with the wisest in all ages, and can select books for perusal which are best adapted to our benefit. There we can read again and again what perplexes us by its obscurity, or that which, on account of its importance, we wish to impress on the heart. It is true, that, in society, we may meet with instructive conversation, and that much may be learned, both in knowledge and in piety, from the discourse of those who are eminent in both; but well improved retirement will fit us for availing ourselves more fully of their counsels. Besides, it often happens, that the effect of the best conversation is marred by the burst of folly, or by the cavils of the disputatious. How rare is that intercourse, all the speeches in which could be read without a feeling of regret; but in books, wisdom appears in its best form, and piety in its purest spirit. Let us consider what blessed society may be enjoyed in pious solitude. There angels who minister to the heirs of salvation whisper to the heart many valuable suggestions; and there we trace the steps, and hear the voice of departed saints. There, in turning over the books which they read, in perusing the letters which