

turn a contemptuous eye on all the relics of ancestral pride; and we may then imagine how hard it is for those habit-dyed Ethiopians to change their skins, or these sin-marked Jeopards to efface their spots!

The probability, therefore, that a postponed repentance will ever be an effectual or sincere repentance, may be put to an easy test. If, in a dying hour; if, in the day of the mind's feebleness, and decay, and waste; if, in a brief remnant, cut off from a life of worldliness, or sleep, or sin, the soul can evoke into existence a new order of affections, and, in the twinkling of an eye, put on its dress for heaven; we need moralise no longer on the perils of spiritual delay; we may let conscience sleep on in the lap of the great thief of time, saying, for this time, let us "eat and drink," and hereafter we can repent and die. But if, on the contrary, worldly habits strike root downwards, the more they bear fruit upwards; if sanctification demands that every ancient idol fall and be crushed before the ark of God; and if time, if labor, if holy and persevering effort, be needed to educate immortal spirits for the skies; then, was ever folly like his folly, who, with a conviction that his soul is at this moment lying under the wrath of God, would say to the messenger of heaven, whoever he may be, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee?"

Neither are the results of experience, as collected from those who are in the habit of attending the closing scenes of life, at all opposed to the conclusion of antecedent reasoning. Physicians concur with Divines in attesting, that men, for the most part, die as they live, and that the exhaustion of nature's strength alone frequently incapacitates them for any essential change in the state and affections of the mind. Thus, those who live the life of the unrighteous, die the death of the unrighteous also; the power of unbelief is as victorious in the dying hour, as in the hours of health; sin, the world, and the devil hold their victims in strong delusion to the last; and that Saviour, who, through life, had been regarded as "a root out of a dry ground," appears, even in death, to be destitute of all "form and comeliness."

Let us conclude with one or two practical reflections:—First, how great is the danger of resisting religious convictions! of turning a deaf ear to language, which, by its effects on our minds, is discerned to be the voice of God! It is not needful that we should have a Paul preaching before us, or a Drusilla seated beside us, in order that words uttered in the sanctuary should appear to have been so expressly written for us, to have come home to our consciences with so much of closeness and of power, that, although we could not send the preacher away, we were but too willing to be sent away by the preacher; hailing with gladness the breaking up of the solemn assembly, welcoming with eagerness

the in-rushing current of worldly thoughts, and giving a tacit promise to our consciences to call for those holy convictions at some more convenient season. But, how know we that these convictions will come when we call them? Where is our warrant for supposing that the Holy Spirit will bide our time; will tarry our convenience; will wait the day when we, having nothing else to occupy us, will permit him to rekindle his quenched flame, and to repeat the warnings which we neglected or despised before? Surely, all experience would look the other way; would teach, that convictions lose their power when they lose their freshness. Felix, we are told, heard Paul preach *many times* afterwards; but we do not find that he ever TREMBLED after the first.

Lastly, how great is the affront to God, of this intention to yield to religious convictions hereafter! To delay our preparation for heaven is not a foolish thing only, not a dangerous thing only; it is a profane, a wicked, a God-dishonoring thing. We cannot purpose to amend our lives to-morrow without also purposing to insult God to-day. To tell God that we mean to repent next year, is to tell him that we do not mean to repent before. We may keep our resolution, or we may not keep it; but the mere *forming* of it implies that, until the time specified arrives, we intend to go on sinning still, to make more work for his pardoning mercy in the interim; cutting out, as it were, a space from the term of our moral probation, and bargaining with high heaven for an indulgence for prospective sin.

Hear we, then, the conclusion of the whole matter, which we fairly sum up, in a single sentence, thus: that REPENTANCE DELAYED IS MERCY TRIPLIED WITH, AND A HOLY LIFE INTENDED ONLY, IS LIFE ETERNAL LOST. To say to any religious conviction, "Go thy way for this time," is to degrade reason, to injure the soul, to disparage heaven, to dishonor God. It is as if we designed to give God the worst of our days, and speed on self and sin the best; to reserve a lamb of the first year for the world, and to bring to the Lord only the maimed and the blind: it is to offer at the shrine of the evil one our manhood, our vigor, our freshness, our strength; and to lay on the altar of the God of heaven an offering of disease, decay, old age, and mental feebleness. God grant that we may bring no more of the vain oblations; but now, in the accepted time, now, in our convenient season, may "offer an offering in righteousness, and call upon the name of the Lord!" Amen.

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The Worse the Better.

THIS is a paradox, the universal truth of which I would, of course, by no means venture to affirm; but I think that, within rather