

proper to give full time for all the evils of a corrupted heart to mature, and all the growing difficulties of indebted nature to accumulate, and all the excesses of audacious passions to run riot to their utmost length : till human remedies should have been pronounced powerless, and the most sanguine hopes declared bankrupt, and all moral curbs and restraints had been either broken or cast loose, or borne away in impetuous course. It was proper, too, to give leisure for all human power and wisdom to try its skill upon the evils that broke down prostrate humanity, to see what the hand of iron rule could do towards checking the violence of lawless aims, and what the milder counsels of aged wisdom could effect in taming the boisterous passions, or in unravelling the perplexities of man's nature, that seemed to have produced them. All had been tried, and all had failed. Every empire that had striven to subdue men by might, had stirred up to higher excitement the worst of human passions, and had deranged still further the moral order ; every new sect of boasted wisdom had confused more fearfully the simple principles of duty, and often darkened rather, when it desired to give light.

Such are the moments when the Almighty loves to step in, so to come between the creature and its despair, and show His power when it may be undistinguishable from His goodness. He would not deliver Israel from bondage, till intolerable hardships and crushing oppression had rendered it without hope. (Exod. ii. 23.) When Ezechias was beyond human cure, and had said, "in the midst of my days I shall go the gates of hell" (Is. xxxviii. 5), He added fifteen years to his life.