

salutary things often produce no good, and the most noxious no evil. Abstract vice, however, may be and often is, engendered in idleness; though the moment it becomes efficient it must quit its cradle and cease to be idle. In monasteries and convents, therefore, all who admit our nature to be radically corrupt will expect to find the seeds and roots of evil to abound—to be feeble in their strength owing to a restricted mode of life, and the want of space for expansion and exercise—still to abound in luxuriance and variety.

Amidst this evil of monastic seclusion, there is no substantial good to compensate or counteract it. Admitting it to have some salutary influence on those who submit to it, “not by constraint but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but with a ready mind,” that influence reaches not beyond a very narrow circle. There are undoubtedly some to be found in all ages and in most countries, who have experienced all the calm delight and satisfaction they expected and professed—whose feelings have been raised and kept above the world by perseverance in strict and solemn devotion—who have “sat in heavenly places,” and have partaken of emotions and enjoyments beyond the power of language to describe. All this is possible, and by no means improbable.

But how narrow has been its widest range, and how insignificant its greatest influence on society! Private and secluded devotion is of infinite value as the main spring, the moving cause, of an active piety and a wide spreading beneficence: but such piety as this—never coming forth into public action, and scarcely known by the mass of mankind to exist—is as restricted in its social influence, as it is productive of personal superstition, and surrounded and sustained by local corruption. Were this piety in itself as undefiled as its names and pretensions would imply—were it always the vestal inviolable devotion which it

assur  
when  
—its  
nicel  
ment  
essen  
held  
major  
it in  
ture,  
self is  
crop  
churc  
can s  
those  
ture  
think  
unall  
prerog

Ap  
the be  
toms  
that r  
to the  
of tha  
One o  
criber  
accoun  
ments  
the to  
spicuo  
kissin  
in the  
remer  
little  
face t  
floor,