

cause, evidently suspecting that the sorrow of heart which betrayed itself in his face was the index of a troubled conscience guilty of some treasonable act or purpose. Upon hearing the real cause of his sadness, the King enquired what request he had to make, and Nehemiah, in relating the circumstance, beautifully adds—"So I prayed to the God of heaven"—and then he preferred his request to the King. Now this prayer was obviously an act of the mind unattended by any external sign of devotion, and known only to the Being "whose eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good." The conduct of Nehemiah not only furnishes an illustration of the manner in which the devout mind may avail itself of inexhaustible resources, but presents also an example for imitation. When a question is proposed, an opinion asked, or counsel sought, the mind might be prepared by a direct act of silent devotion to give a wise reply, to express wholesome sentiments, to tender good advice. The introduction of a stranger—entrance into society—intercourse with friends—the expenditure of money—the investment of capital—the review of the proportion of income directly devoted to the service of him who gave the whole—all furnish materials for such pious exercises; in truth, the instances are numberless in which opportunities are afforded to the watchful for habitually connecting thoughts of God with things of earth, by offering requests, deprecation, or thanksgiving.

It must be obvious that the graces of the Spirit can only grow and become strong by exercise, and that in their exercise no limits can be assigned to their growth and vigour; but how can they be exercised daily if we exclude them from our worldly occupations? We profess to be led by the Spirit, but that heavenly Being recognizes no distinction of days in the guidance he vouchsafes. It is not an impossible thing for a believer to walk in the spirit every day, and certainly this should be the aim of all; and so far from the social, mercantile, professional or other secular duties of a christian forming a necessary impediment to his spirituality, and hindering his advancement in godliness, they furnish the very choicest occasions for the exercise of forbearance, kindness, fidelity, truthfulness, honesty, purity, justice, and whatsoever things are lovely, virtuous and of good report.

It would be impossible for a christian to pursue the course now recommended, for any lengthened period, without receiving material benefit from the checks, corrective influences and guidance which he would experience. He might not fully acquire the difficult art of ruling the tongue, but he would frequently be restrained from speaking unadvisedly with his lips. He might still have occasion to lament over the predominancy of ungoverned passions, but he could not daily walk with him who stills the raging of the elements, and not feel something of his controlling energy upon his own spirit. His unhallowed temper might often be the cause of shame and trouble, but the softening influences from above would insensibly improve it. He would find the danger of being taken off his guard by any sudden temptation

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