

to come within sight of such a high attainment. To live in this world, and yet keep ourselves uncontaminated by its influence, pure in heart and life, seems as impossible as to be immersed in water and yet keep dry; or to walk a muddy road, and keep our garments clean; or to take fire into our bosom and not be burned.— Well, if not more impossible than these, it can be done. It has been done—to some extent at least, by help of Him who says, “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

To be plunged overhead in water, and yet keep dry, is not impossible. From rocking boat, or sandy shore, observe yon sea-fowl poised on white wing above the deep! Catching sight of her prey, see! she descends like a flash of light, diving into the belly of the wave; ere long she emerges, and bearing no touch of damp on her snowy plumage, rises into the air with feathers dry as the eagle's that springs from the rock to soar in sunny skies.— With feet webbed to swim, and broad sails to fly, and warm downs to preserve her heat, God has furnished this bird with an oil, that, coating her feathers, protects them from the touch of water. Nor is it impossible to crawl undefiled in mire.— How often have I seen a creeping thing come wriggling out of the foulest mud, pure, clean, without a speck on its ringed and slimy form. And if God enables it by a fluid secreted from its lubricious skin to pass through defilement undefiled, may not the Christian say, Shall He take such care of the poor worm that we tread upon, and not preserve from worse pollution those whom He has called to heaven, and redeemed with the blood of His beloved Son?

“He who His Son, most dear and loved,  
Gave up for us to die,  
Shall He not all things freely give  
That goodness can supply?”

Grant that contact with a sinful world is like taking fire into our bosom;—it does not follow that we shall certainly be burned. With the troubled king, his nobles, and the eager multitude that crowd round the fiery furnace, look at these three Hebrews! Their naked feet are on glowing coals! they breathe the burning flame! and yet they come forth, no hair singed on beard or eyelash, nor smell of fire upon their clothes.

We might meet this difficulty with such answer as the holy Leighton once gave to such another plea. Grieved with the unhappy state of his country, and the failure of his own well-meant attempts to reconcile his countrymen to prelacy, and stop the bloody cruelties of the time, he had retired into England to pass the clouded evening of his life in the house of a married sister. Having a family, she had many domestic cares; and cumbered by them, she came far short of his close and devout walk with God. One day, addressing her brother, who had never married, she said, “It is easy for you to live a life; it is easy for you to live a holy life; it is otherwise with me; with children and many household cares to occupy my thoughts and engross my attention, such a life as yours is to me impossible.” With one blow of his gentle hand, Leighton demolished her plea. He engaged in no argument, nor set himself to prove her wrong, but kindly turning to her, and quoting God's own word, he said, “Enoch walked with God, and begat sons and daughters.” Like her, many dear high degrees of grace beyond their reach; therefore they aim low, and in consequence of that their attainments are low; for few are so fortunate as the son of Kish, who, leaving home to seek his father's asses, found a crown on the way. We expect too little; and to those who would dismiss this subject, abandoning all efforts after a purity which they deem as impossible in this world, as to live in water, or breathe unhurt in fire, I have an answer, drawn also drawn from the Word of God—an arrow taken from the quiver where the good Archbishop found his shaft. What saith the Lord? He puts the case in your own form, and taking your very figures of fire and water, says, “When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the waters they shall not overflow thee; thou shalt walk through the fire, and not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

To keep themselves unspotted from the world.

*God's people are carefully to avoid its vices.*

There is much vice in the world.—Thousands make no profession of religion; having broken loose from their anchors, and drifted into practical infidelity they