

ing to arrest it at this point, have converted piety into one long agony of groans and tears.

The resolution to serve God having been made, we come now to the ordering of the outward life and the discipline of the affections in accordance with it. The life of God must be deep set in firm and steadfast principle, and must be built up and fortified on every side by virtuous habit. Habit and principle are not indeed the same thing with the spirit of Religion ; but they are indispensable conditions of its secure and continuous existence. They define and protect the sphere within which it lives and breathes, and give it free scope to act — exempt from constraint and invasion. In this second stage of the religious life, the mind is less fettered by anxiety and fear. It has more reliance on itself. It feels safer against temptation and sin. It has more confidence towards God, and greater freedom in devotion. It has less of excitement and rapture — fewer of the deep convulsive struggles of faith and conscience, which marked its opening course — but a more serene and habitual consciousness of the divine presence and of moral responsibility. This passage from the first to the second stage of the religious life, is the most critical period in the spiritual history of the Soul. It furnishes the test, whether the strong emotions which once agitated it, were merely a sudden gust that swept over it and passed away, or the harbingers of deep and radical change. The emotions, when they came, might be genuine. But did they last ? Thousands have meant well, and striven for a time after the life of God. Alas ! they were open to impressions of every kind ; and the latest effaced the first. They wanted fixed resolve, distinct purpose, and the power of self-denial. The world