

short earthly existence has just commenced. But, alas! the very thief, the day before his being captured, had excellent intentions. The abandoned sinner, the hour before he was struck by the mortal disease which removed him from this world, had some of the noblest *intentions*—the most virtuous, perhaps, never had better. Oh that we could all be judged by our intentions! Now it is a plain and undeniable truth, that mere intentions are the most pernicious things in the world. If a man had *no* good intentions he would know that he was decidedly wicked, and that he might have a chance of being some day roused to a sense of his unrighteous state, and thereafter becoming reformed: but the man of good intentions goes dreaming on from the beginning of one year to the close of another, constantly absolving himself from his unholy deeds through the efficacy of this pretended virtue. Far honest, and indeed far safer, is he who does not pretend to conceal either from himself or others that he is what he ought not to be, than the mean coward who sneaks into a good character with himself, and at the same time deceives the world by an assumed and deceptive merit. In fact every good intention, not in proper time carried into effect, is an *offence*, and by no means a trivial one; for it only tends to supplant the performance that might have otherwise taken place. Good intentions lull the conscience to sleep, and then carry their victim in blind and fatal security, to destruction. As “all men think all men mortal but themselves,” so also do all men think all men liable to moral rebuke but themselves. When, for example, we hear some fervent pulpit admonitions, we think that these are all very proper for people in *general*, but never once suppose that we, in particular, are at all in need of them. Just so, many individuals who read these New-Year’s reflections will say, “How just the writer is upon many *with whom we are acquainted!*” But not one in ten, perhaps, will bring the moral home to himself, and enquire to what extent he may have been guilty of only *meaning* well, even during the course of the year that is just ended. This, however, should be done—then might many of us awake from the dream of last year’s good intentions, and endeavour to *do*, this year, what we have heretofore contented ourselves with *designing to do*. Expel every symptom of an intention which is excluding a performance: for we cannot be ignorant that while we go on doing many things which we ought *not to do*, we content ourselves in a great measure by merely *intending* that which we ought to do. Let us reflect on the millions who died in eighteen hundred and forty without performing their several duties in life. Before the seat of the eternal they will be interrogated respecting their *deeds*; and how will the gauze of intentions, when they hold it up, appear in that mighty eye, if *deeds* be wanting to prove the reality of those good principles which they professed? But stop. Does not the uncertainty of life shew us that we are liable, in one moment, if it so pleased God, to be in the same awful predicament with those who departed during the last year? For already the word may have gone forth respecting each one of us, “This year thou shalt die.”

In prosecuting these our reflections at the commencement of the year (the most important to *ourselves* that ever commenced) we shall ponder