

earnest-minded in the counting-room, the manufactory, the marketplace, the field, the farm; to carry out our good and solemn thoughts and feelings into the throng and thoroughfare of daily life—this is the great difficulty of our Christian calling. No man not lost to all moral influence can help feeling his worldly passions calmed, and some measure of seriousness stealing over his mind, when engaged in the performance of the more awful and sacred rites of religion; but the atmosphere of the domestic circle, the exchange, the street, the city's throng, amidst coarse work and cankering cares and toils, is a very different atmosphere from that of a communion-table. Passing from the one to the other has often seemed as if the sudden transition from a tropical to a polar climate—from balmy warmth and sunshine to murky mist and freezing cold. And it appears sometimes as difficult to maintain the strength and steadfastness of religious principle and feeling when we go forth from the church into the world, as it would be to preserve an exotic alive in the open air in winter, or to keep the lamp that burns steadily within doors from being blown out if you take it abroad unsheltered from the wind.

So great, so all but insuperable, has this difficulty appeared to men, that it is but few who set themselves honestly and resolutely to the effort to overcome it. The great majority, by various shifts or expedients, evade the hard task of being good and holy, at once in the church and in the world.

In ancient times, for instance, it was, as we all know, the not uncommon expedient among devout persons—men deeply impressed with the thought of an eternal world and the necessity of preparing for it, but distracted by the effort to attend to the duties of religion amidst the business and temptations of secular life—to fly the world altogether, and abandoning society and all social claims, to betake themselves to some hermit solitude, some quiet and cloistered retreat, where, as they fondly deemed, “the world-forgetting, by the world forgot,” their work would become worship, and life be uninterruptedly devoted to the cultivation of religion in the soul. In our own day, the more common device, where religion and the world conflict, is not that of the superstitious recluse, but one even much less safe and venial. Keen for this world, yet not willing to hold on the next, eager for the advantages of time, yet not prepared to abandon all religion and stand by the consequences, there is a very numerous class who attempt to compromise the matter, to treat religion and the world like two creditors, whose claims cannot