

attend, let me tender to him all my love. For how sweet is the memory of former delights, and how indispensable is their renewal! There as of yore, help us O Jesus, with thee to hymn our Father's glories; there declare to us his name; there breathe on us again the Holy Ghost; there set us "as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm, for love is strong as death;" there bestow, and there accept affection's renewed pledges, Who but Jesus is the fount of my bliss, the source of my strength, the friend of my bosom, and the saviour of my soul? Who else quickened me when dead, found me when lost, restored me when ruined, and established me when but weak in his ways? Who else made me a child of God, who was a child of hell; an heir of heaven who was a heir of woe; rich, who was poor; beloved, who was hateful; clean, who was polluted; clothed, who was naked; reconciled to God, renewed in his image, and welcomed with him to sit in heavenly places? *Let me come to his table with gratitude.* As multitudes have done, I have professed his name, but have I with the few walked in his ways? Am I kept from apostasy? I owe it to him. It is in Christ I am garrisoned and by his mighty power alone can I be continually kept. To his word, providence, grace, ordinances, and Holy Spirit, am I indebted for all my privileges, so invaluable, and my prospects so pleasant, through him I have been upheld, and delivered from all evil through another year.

"Here I raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by thy help I'm come;
And I hope by thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home."

But I would draw near with penitence. I cannot but deplore the many sins of the past year; how many, how flagrant, how aggravated; sins of omission and commission—sins of thought word and deed,—sins against God and man,—sins private and public, secret and open—sins in the church and in the world,—sins wilful and thoughtless—sins every day and even every moment! O! have I not cause for thorough heartfelt penitence? With godly sorrow I would come to thee, my grieved, my crucified, my forgiving Saviour,—humbly, as thy most unworthy disciple, I would approach thy table. *There would I renew my faith in thee as the Christ of God.* I would trust in the sacrifice of Jesus. I would confide in his word of promise. I would lay claim to his will and testament. I would cast myself upon thy mercy and saving grace, saying with David of old, "unto thy hand I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me O Lord God of truth." For Jesus only can pardon, sanctify, and eternally bless the penitent believer. O, I would believe in Christ, accept the system that bears his name, and walk only in those steps in which he walked. I would be his, a pardoned sinner, a justified believer.

"My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of thee;
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."

And let mine be the spirit of prayerful devoted zeal. Let me renew my vows of dedication to the Lord. Let me crucify my natural selfishness. Let me seek to live of service to Christ in his kingdom. Let me aim to exalt him in every possible way, and to induce sinners to look unto him, and live. Let me wrestle in prayer for the triumph of the reign of grace in my own heart and life, and for the ingathering to his church of the elect of God, rejoicing or lamenting, as need shall be. This year let my body, soul, and spirit,—my time, wealth, and intellect,—my influence example, and active efforts,—all be laid out for man's good, and God's glory—and furtherance of the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. *And let me be joyful too.* And why not? Who can have more reason for it? God is mine, my portion, my eternal all. I am a year nearer my spiritual perfection, my heavenly home, my eternal reward. The

church is nearing the consummation of its glory. The Redeemer will shortly be universally enthroned. In him, and in such prospects his people are already happy; and many are being removed to that superior happiness to which death admits them. I will go to the table, my very soul exclaiming,

"How happy all thy servants are;
How great thy grace to me!
My life which thou hast made thy care,
Lord, I devote to thee."

SPIRITUAL DREAMERS.

BY THE REV. JOHN RALSTON, A. M.,

Behold this dreamer that cometh next! He is one who imagines that because he is punctual in religious observances, and externally decent in behaviour, he is therefore a true worshipper of God.

It must appear to every one that this person also is under a false delusion. Every institution of religion ought, no doubt, to be attended to, and is actually observed by all who have a proper regard for the Deity. But, nevertheless, it is not to be supposed, that going the round of religious duties is all that is requisite to constitute a character which is acceptable in the sight of God. No; you may sing the praises of the Most High, you may read the scriptures of truth, you may approach the throne of the Eternal, you may attend upon the preaching of the word, you may observe the ordinances of the gospel, you may even be most punctual in the performance of these duties and others of a similar nature, and yet not be persons with whom God is well pleased; nay more, you may not only seem to be religious, but you may also have the appearance of paying respect to the duties of morality, you may maintain at least a certain course of conduct which is decent in the eye of the world, without being chargeable with any of those foul crimes which stain the life of the profligate amongst men. Do you not recollect the account which is given of the Pharisees under the law? They had a most splendid profession; they affected a great show of religion in outward things; they were scrupulously exact in their attention to the rites and ceremonies of Moses, in addition to which they subjoined the tradition of the elders; they fasted often, they prayed frequently and long, they pointedly paid tithes of all that they possessed, and they gave much alms to the people. So exact was their observance of the law, and so sanctimonious was their external behaviour, that they gained great credit in the nation, though the truth was, that they were very unworthy of it, being, in reality, proud, covetous, unjust, superstitious, and hypocritical. You therefore must certainly be dreaming,—you, who imagine that you are a true worshipper of God, because you are punctual in religious observances, and apparently decent in your moral behavior. The world perhaps may think well of you, in this condition, and may be ready to flatter you in the belief that it is just so with you as you foolishly suppose. But be not deceived. Remember that the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. It is not enough that you draw near to God with your mouth,—that you honour him with your lips, and that you reverence him with your external deportment. No; but you must be sincere and upright in the discharge of your religious duties; you must engage in divine service, not only with the body, but also with all the faculties of the soul; for as God is a Spirit so, if you would worship him aright, you must worship him in spirit and in truth. Such must be your piety of heart, such your devotion of mind, that you must be thereby led to acknowledge, to fear, and to love God, the grand object of your veneration, and at the same time inclined to act in a just and charitable manner towards your neighbour. Your religion must not be the shadow

without the substance; your godliness must not be the form without the experience of the power. If you should be so intimated as to stop short of real religion, or of genuine holiness, you will not only impose upon the world, but you will deceive your own soul. Hear the language of Jesus, and be warned from this state of delusion: "Except you righteousness, saith the Saviour, shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Behold this dreamer that cometh next! He is one who imagines that he will have time enough afterwards to think of religion, though for the present he gives his whole soul to business, or to folly, or to dissipation.

It must appear to every one that this person also is under a fatal delusion. He speaks of giving his whole soul to business, to folly, or to dissipation; expecting that he will have sufficient time, at some future period, to attend to religion, and prepare for eternity. As to secular business, let it be observed, that though we are commanded to be active and diligent therein, yet liberty is not granted us to devote the whole of our attention to this: no; but we are required, like immortal creatures, to labour, not solely for meat that perisheth, but also for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life. As to folly and dissipation, it must be evident to every rational being, that it is the language of madness to speak of engaging in these at all. The wise and benevolent Author of Nature has given us no license for such indulgence, in the least degree, either now or afterwards. Our inclination to folly is rather to be checked, and our vicious desires immediately suppressed. Now, as to employing the soul at present wholly about secular affairs, or sensual gratification, in expectation of having time afterwards to attend to religion; this imagination is as wild as any. Although it had been allowable to engage the mind in the senses which I have mentioned, yet it is not like one in the exercise of his judgment, to propose attending to the body in preference to the soul, which is the nobler part of his constitution. Besides, how irrational is it to think of coming out from the world, whenever he has a mind to exercise himself unto godliness! The longer one has been in pursuit of the profits or pleasures of this life, the less will he be inclined to withdraw and direct his attention to that which is different. But what is worst of all, the promising himself plenty of time hereafter to prepare for eternity. A more foolish, a more absurd notion than this could never have arisen in the human mind. You therefore must certainly be dreaming, who imagine that you will have time enough afterwards to attend to religion, though at present you live like a citizen of the world. If you be a man of business,—one whose heart and hands are therein engaged,—be persuaded of the impropriety of your conduct, in having your mind wholly directed that way. Or if you be a child of pleasure, be convinced of your folly in keenly pursuing that which cannot satisfy, but which will rather create uneasiness to the soul. Awake, and see your error in attending to temporal concerns before those that are spiritual. You are exhorted, remember, to seek first, and above all things, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, resting assured that whatever else is good for you, that the Lord will give. Regardless, as it would seem, of such an exhortation, you defer the business of eternity, imagining that you will have abundance of time hereafter to attend to the same. But, be not deceived. Although it were proper to delay preparation for another and a better state of existence; yet you are surely dreaming, in thinking that you will have time enough for accomplishing this at some future period. What ground have you to suppose so? There is none, at least that I know, upon which any but a madman would have the presumption to rest. Although you may have survived different troubles, and seen many days upon earth, yet this is no argument that you are still to survive others, and see some more comfortable days in the land of the living. No; the very next trouble that seizes you may be the immediate forerunner of death: