

medicine, which I had neither ability to do, nor they capacity to comprehend. They said, likewise, that the regimen which I prescribed was too strict; for I told them honestly that, if they did not abstain from some things of which they were very fond, my medicine would do them no good. I was often grieved, though not so much as I ought, to see so many determined to die, rather than take the only medicine that could preserve their lives.

There were more than a few who deceived both themselves and me, by pretending to take my medicines, and yet did not. None grieved me more than these, but they could not deceive me long. For as the medicine was infallible, I knew that whoever took it, and observed the regimen, would soon show signs of convalescence, and that they were getting better, though they were not perfectly well; and, therefore, when these signs were wanting, I was sure the medicine had not been taken.

I have not time to enumerate all the signs that accompany salvation, but I shall mention a few. First, a broken and contrite spirit. This is indispensably necessary, for by nature we are full of pride; and God resisteth the proud, and giveth His grace only to the humble. Secondly, a simple and upright spirit, free from artifice and disguise. It is said of the blessed man whose sins are forgiven, in his spirit there is no guile. He is open and undisguised. Thirdly, gentle, gracious tempers. If a man like a lion takes my medicine, he presently becomes a lamb. He is not easily offended. He is very easily reconciled; he indulges no anger; he harbours no resentment; he lives upon forgiveness himself, and is therefore ready to forgive, if he has aught against any. Fourthly, benevolence, kindness, and an endeavour to please, in opposition to that selfishness which is our natural character. Fifthly, a spiritual mind, which is the beginning of life and peace; a weanedness from the world and its poor toys, and a thirst for communion with God through Christ.

I could go on, but let this suffice. These signs are at first weak, for a Christian is a child before he is a man; but grace grows by exercise, by experience, and by a diligent use of the appointed means. My medicine enlightens the understanding, softens the heart, and gives a realising of what the Scriptures declare of the glorious person, the wonderful love, the bitter sufferings, of the Saviour, and the necessity and efficacy of His death and agonies upon the cross. When these things are understood by the teachings of the Holy Spirit (whose influence is always afforded to those that take the medicine), the cure is already begun; all the rest will follow, and the patient recovers apace; though there are sometimes transient relapses, and a spice of the old disorder will hang about them, until they are removed to the pure air of a better world.

Oh, what love! that such a Saviour should die for such sinners as we are; and what a marvellous mercy to me, that I should be brought from the horrid wilds of Africa to proclaim His goodness! That I, who was an infidel, a blasphemer, and a profligate, should be spared to stand as a proof that Jesus Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners! *John Newton.*

SOFT ANSWERS.

EACH member of a family sees the infirmities of the rest; but it is one thing to see them, and another thing to bear with them. This we should endeavour to do, because we all require to be borne with in our turn. We may not all have bad tempers, but we are all more or less liable to *moods*. We are affected by the weather, by health, by secret trials which are known only to God.

These changes depress the spirits, and unhinge us for the time. Not that they produce sullenness. This is an ugly passion—the twin-sister of revenge; hateful and difficult to cure; the curse of the bosom that harbours it, and the bane of domestic enjoyment. The depression of spirits alluded to requires the indulgence of those into whose society we happen to be thrown. It unfits us for doing our part, for contributing to the common fund of instruction and entertainment.

But another reason for exercising forbearance is still stronger—this is the *only* way in which a family can get on with comfort. That house will be kept in a turmoil where there is no meek submission to injuries, no soft answers to turn away wrath.

If you lay a single stick of wood upon the andirons and apply fire to it, it will go out; put on another stick, and they will burn; add a half-dozen, and you will have a grand blaze. There are other fires subject to the same conditions. If one member of a family gets into a passion and is let alone, he will cool down, and possibly be ashamed, and repent. But oppose temper to temper; pile on the fuel; draw in the other members of the group, and let one harsh answer be followed by another; and there will soon be a blaze which will enwrap them all. The venerable Philip Henry understood this well; and when his son Matthew, the commentator, was married, he sent these lines to the wedded pair:—

“Love one another; pray off together; and see
You never both together angry be;
If one speak fire, t’other with water come;
Is one provoked: be t’other soft or dumb.”

INFIDELITY.

An infidel was taken dangerously ill, and became alarmed for his soul’s safety. Infidelity yielded him no comfort. He then began to examine, for the first time, the nature and grounds of the Christian faith. He became convinced of its truth, and of its suitability to his need and danger. Embracing it, in penitence and faith, he found it the power of God unto salvation. In the meantime some of his infidel friends, ignorant of his change, and concerned to think that he was dying, called upon him.

“We have come,” they said, “to advise you to become a Christian; because, if Christianity be false, you will suffer no harm, but should it be true, you will be a great gainer.” Infidelity cannot stand the test when face to face with the unseen world.