

CURIOSITY.

Curiosity is a propensity or disposition of the soul which inclines it to inquire after new objects, and to delight in viewing them. Curiosity is proper, when it springs from a desire to know our duty, to mature our judgments, to enlarge our minds, and to regulate our conduct; but improper when it wishes to know more of God, of the decrees; the origin of evil; the state of men, or the nature of things; than it is designed for us to know. The evil of this is evident. It reproaches God's goodness; it is a violation of Scripture, Deut. xxii. 29; it robs us of our time; it often makes us unhappy; lessens our usefulness, and produces mischief. To cure this disposition let us consider the divine command, Phil. iv. 6, that every thing essential is revealed: that God cannot err; that we shall be satisfied in a future state, John xiii. 7. Curiosity concerning the affairs of others is exceedingly reprehensible. "It interrupts," says an elegant writer, "the order, and breaks the peace of society. Persons of this disposition are dangerous troublers of the world. Crossing the line in which others move, they create confusion, and awaken resentment. Hence, many a friendship has been broken; the peace of many a family has been overturned; and much bitter and lasting discord has been propagated through society. Such a disposition is entirely the reverse of that amiable spirit of charity our Lord inculcates. Charity, like the sun, brightens every object on which it shines: a censorious disposition casts every character into the darkest shade it will bear. It is to be further observed, that all impertinent curiosity about the affairs of others tends greatly to obstruct personal reformation. They who are so officiously occupied about their neighbours, have little leisure, and less inclination to observe their own defects, or to mind their own duty. From their inquisitive researches, they find, or imagine they find, in the behaviour of others, an apology for their own failings; and the favourite result of their inquiries generally is, to rest satisfied with themselves. We should consider, also, that every excursion of vain curiosity about others is a subtraction from that time and thought which are due to ourselves and to God. In the great circle of human affairs, there is room for every one to be busy, and well employed in his own province, without encroaching upon that of others. It is the province of superiors to direct—of inferiors to obey—of the learned to be instructive—of the ignorant to be docile; of the old to be communicative—of the young to be advisable and diligent. In all the various relations which subsist among us in life, as husband and wife, master and servant, parents and children, relations and friends, rulers and subjects, innumerable duties stand ready to be performed; innumerable calls to activity present themselves on every hand, sufficient to fill up with advantage and honour the whole time of man." *Blair's Serms.*, vol. iv. ser. 8.; *Clarke's Serms.*, ser. on Deut. xxix. 29; *Scott's Posth. Serms.*, ser. 7.

RELIGIOUS LITERATURE.

THE NECESSITY OF CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS.

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;" that is, that ye may be quickly alarmed at the indications that a thing is becoming temptation. "Here a questionable effect is beginning upon me; say, but it is a bad effect." "Certain principles of truth and duty are beginning to slacken their hold upon me." Beware of becoming so partial to a thing, that this circumstance shall appear a trifling matter. You may have seen such examples; uneasiness has been felt for a while; there may have been a questioning whether to relinquish the object; but the heart grew faster to it. Be cautious of pursuing an evident good in a way in which there must be temptation. Be specially fearful of that where, if there be good to be obtained, the good is to come afterward, but the temptation first. If the temptation coming first shall blind my perception of the good, cool my zeal, or destroy my relish of it,—if I should stop with the temptation and abandon the good! And be fearful of that where the temptation is certain, and the good only possible, or, at best, only probable. A dangerous problem it is,—how much good possible, is worth how much temptation certain? Beware

of being beguiled in this manner; namely, that a positive, unquestionable good can be alleged; but, in truth, it is not this that is the real inducement, but that something connected with that good offers a pleasing temptation which can be entertained under the plea of the good. Be peculiarly suspicious in any case where all appears pleasing and attractive, and there is nothing for mortification and self-denial. Let suspicion and alarm be awakened, when we find our minds at work to make out any thing to be innocent against doubt, and an uneasy conscience. Be careful that when unquestionable duty leads into the way of temptation, we stay not longer near the temptation than we are honestly about the duty. Beware of the kind of companionship that directly leads into temptation; but let no man be beguiled to think he is safe against temptation at the times when his only companion is himself: the whole tempting world may then come to him through the medium of the imagination—the great deep of his own heart may then be broken up. In this solitude may come that tempter that came to our Lord in the desert. In truth, unhappily, there is no situation or employment in which temptation is not to be apprehended.

We may add, what vigilance and prayer are necessary against the sudden violent surprises of temptation! These may come with as little warning almost as the dreadful accidents that befall men's persons. A sudden flash of infernal fire kindles the passions and prostrates the judgment and conscience. Divine aid can come as suddenly as these assaults; but who may confidently rely that it shall?

Now, think of all this; and then of a heedless, self-trusting, and prayerless state of mind. What must be the consequences? Serious persons, amidst their self-reproachful reflections, may be amazed at the preventing goodness of God, that still worse has not befallen them. To think how many days and weeks they have begun, how many seasons and occupations passed through, with little of real earnest prayer, little of solicitous, conscientious vigilance! How grateful should they be, to think how many temptations they have been mercifully kept out of the way of, which they probably would not have resisted! But let them consider whether the proper testimony of that gratitude will be, that henceforward they little care for, or apply to, his heavenly protection. They would have cause to dread that, even if they should not be at length fully and finally given up to evil, they will be suffered to fall into some great iniquity, in order to rouse them by the horrors of guilt. Think solemnly of the frightful extent of the possibilities of falling into sin; and that it is an insult to God to calculate on escaping without the means he has enjoined—Watch and pray." These must be combined; for watching, without prayer, were but an impious homage to ourselves.—Prayer, without watching, were but an impious, and also absurd, homage to God.—*Lectures, by the late Rev. John Foster.*

LOST IN THE CHURCH.

It is a fearful thing to be lost amid the darkness of heathenism, far away from Sabbaths, and Sanctuaries, and Bibles, and the sound of the church-going bell; so far beyond the farthest outskirts of Christendom, that rumor hath not carried there even the name of Jesus or the word of salvation; but a deeper, darker, woe is his who is lost in the church, and sits dead before minister and altar, on the seat hollowed by the late presence of the glorified pious, the Bible leaves beside him marked with texts and tears. There are such in all our churches,—dead souls at the altar of the living God—lost souls at the Redeemer's feast and table. It was an Egyptian custom at festal banquets to introduce a corpse, and seat it at the table, to remind the guests of their mortality. Its fleshless, skinny hand rested on the board, but moved not to the viands; the glassy eyeballs fixed their dead stare upon the guests, but the light of life in which those orbs once swam, was extinguished forever. In such a presence the festivities proceeded. I have seen the corpse at the sacramental supper, stone-dead amid the guests of Jesus. Not a tear on the cheek nor a quiver of the lip, when Jesus showed his wounds. The dull, dead, unlightened eye never sparkled, the brim-beard did not, the contorted tongue clave to the roof of its mouth, amid all the outbreak of a Saviour's love and tenderness? Do I speak in

figures? I only give to a Bible figure a Bible application, and alas, figures are inadequate to set for the entire melancholy of the case;

And oh, my fallen brother, that readest these thoughts, thou art that dead among the living, the corpse at the feet of the gospel. Thou sittest like the living, with a lamp in thy hand and a name on thy forehead—but the lamp has no oil, and the name upon thee is leprosy. Yet Christ can raise the dead. What is every conversion, every recovered apostate from the faith, but resurrection? There are worse than thou. I was worse. I renounced the form as well as the power of godliness. I was dead, almost out of the mind of Christians, but not out of the mind of Christ. And when they despaired and I despaired, he spake, and I came forth alive, as I do humbly trust and believe. The lost in the church awaken in me peculiar yearnings, for I have been the same.—Perhaps, too, they interest me more because they are little cared for. There is a great deal of zeal at times to get men into the church, but after that they are uncared for in too many places. We greatly need in all our churches a new awakening of concern for the "lost in the church," and a mighty effort to seek and to save them. At present few seem qualified for such a work. It demands peculiar qualifications, peculiar experience, and peculiar love and patience. The hardest thing to save is a dead christian, but when saved, he may be worth at this crisis of the church a dozen others.

THE FOUND ONE.

—*Mother's Magazine.*

THE FIRST RAINBOW,

AN EMBLEM OF THE CHRISTIAN HOPE.

ON one fine morning in spring might have been seen a little group standing on an eminence, apparently taking a survey of the surrounding scenery. Their countenances wore a solemn expression, yet were not sad; for there was a serenity visible in their features which spoke of the happy resignation that reigned within. All around were to be seen marks of desolation. Where, a few days before, stood the population city with its magnificent edifices and lofty towers, could now be seen only a remnant of its former greatness: while, scattered over the plain, or thrown together in promiscuous heaps, lay the bones of men and animals. The din of business is hushed, and naught is heard save the notes of some solitary bird pouring forth his matin song, or the wind playing mournfully among the withered herbage. The story has been told in few words. A deluge had swept over the earth, and of all its numerous inhabitants, these alone had survived the general wreck; and, while they felt the loneliness of their situation, their hearts beat high with emotions of gratitude towards Him who had thus mercifully preserved them from the fate of their contemporaries.

But the scene is changed. The flushed cheek is turned to that of death-like paleness, and, trembling with anxiety, they look upon each other in silence, for fear has deprived them of power of utterance. Their eyes are directed towards the heavens, where appears a cloud of portentous import; and they expect, in a few moments more, to see the earth again overflowed with water, and they fear lest they themselves should become the victims of the destroying element. At this fearful crisis the heavens appear spanned with a bow of exceeding beauty, composed of all the varied colors of nature. Then was heard the voice of Him, who holds the winds and waves in the hollow of his hand, saying, "Behold I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth, that I will no more destroy it with a flood." These words had power to remove their fears; and, casting themselves anew upon Divine protection, they went on their way rejoicing.

Thus it is in life; each cloud which rises in our sky is to us ominous of evil; and as it casts its darkened shadow across our pathway, we are filled with the most fearful apprehensions; yet even in the darkest moments, if we will but cast our eyes upward we may discover the bright bow of hope, and listening, catch the voice of Inspiration, saying "All things shall work together for good to them who love God."—Then may we dismiss our fears, and, though the clouds of adversity hang dark above us—though afflictions press hard on every side, we may still re-