

prove a hindrance. Communication with our fellow-men can never equal in importance, and ought not to be suffered to prevent communication with the Father of our Spirits. Books may tempt, but none can but suffer loss who neglect the book of God, the lamp of heaven, the directory of the saints. The christian, who from whatever cause, has in the closet become cold, formal, uneasy, or who has forsaken its sacred precincts, may still mingle with the people of God, bear still the name of disciple, but his lamp is going out, "grey hairs are here and there upon him."

*The evil not stayed, finds its way into the social duties of the church, and the "grey hairs" unnoticed, it may be, by him that wears them, appear in assembly of the saints. There the delight that once was felt, the hallowed joy when it was said, "Let us go into the house of the Lord," is past—sitting under the droppings of the sanctuary the soul is unblest—docility and simplicity give way to carping criticism, and the pride that goeth before a fall. No longer are waters drawn with joy from the wells of salvation, the Sabbath is a weariness, the sacred song kindles no flame of devotion in the heart, the voice of prayer is a burden, and the spread table of the Lord inspires not those thoughts and feelings that once thrilled the soul, when redeeming love displayed its banner. In the better days now gone the soul entered the courts of God's house, hungering and thirsting after righteousness and was satisfied, but now, alas, while abundant as ever are the provisions, the plate is diseased. Sweet as "ever is the river, the streams of which make glad the city of our God," but the taste is changed, and what in spiritual youth gave delight, fails to give joy, when "grey hairs are here and there."*

The signs of spiritual declension which we have noticed, tell of diminished love to Him who loved and gave himself for us; failure here, leads to failure in love to the

brethren. Christian affection cannot be sustained independently of love to God. Brotherly love springs out of God love, and when God love is absent, groundless jealousies find easy access to the mind, evils existing among God's people, are magnified. In the absence of the spirit of Christ, patience, forbearance, long-suffering, and forgiveness are no longer manifested, the company and interests of God's children are no longer regarded, and unholy temper and disposition tell the truth, "grey hairs are here and there."

*With all this going back from God, attention to worldly business or pleasure will increase. God and eternity lessen and the world and time grow in the estimation of the backslider. A worldly spirit will be manifested. Without sure footing the man will be disquieted, and vain jangling and unprofitable disputation, will take the place of holy converse and words that minister grace to the hearers. Affectionate, well-meant counsel will meet with cold contempt. Once the wounds of a friend were deemed faithful—a precious ointment—but the heart has become hard, and hence the waters of penitence flow not.*

To accommodate the feelings possessed with a profession of religion, false views as to what is implied in that profession will be readily cherished; former love will now appear as mere fanaticism, former zeal, enthusiasm, closeness of walk with God and punctual attention to Christian duties as narrow bigotry and pharisaism: and the soul may become deceived by the flattering thought, that the views now held are more philosophical and sound than those which rejoiced the soul when it began its religious life, and had the dew of its youth. But alas! the soul is deceived; instead of gathering strength, "grey hairs are here and there."

The course of the backslider might be traced to the terminus too often, alas, reached—the adoption of a semi-injidel