

but a poor woman. To conversation, where a want of feeling, or a want of attention to the feelings of another, finds an imaginary impunity in the phrase, 'tis but a joke. To conformity to the world in religious families, where 'tis but a little music, or 'tis but a quadrille, is intended as an act of toleration for a concert or a ball. It may also apply to the gentler laws of charity, where an unfavorable opinion is formed of another, and we feel satisfied, perhaps, with saying, 'tis but a mistake, a misconception, or an error. Though an apology may be very proper in such a case, yet no apology can ever repair an injury, or soften the anguish to which our mistake, or error in judgment, may have given rise; no capacity the most obtuse; no imbecility the most glaring, can ever make the *amende honorable* for a breach of the law of charity.

So much for the playful part of our subject, and for the minor evils on which it bears. But the line though short, might yet fathom the depths as well as the shallows of our deceitful hearts, and bring up thence much of the ooze and mud of inherent depravity. In that sacred volume which contains lessons of universal application to all hearts, in all ages, we may trace the unhappy tendency of the human mind, to diminish the extent or magnitude of moral evil, by the use of this or similar diminutives. As in the case of the brother of the patriarch who pleaded for a devoted city of old, saying, "Is it not a little one?" In the case of the Syrian soldier, who recollecting all the coolness and freshness of Abana and Pharpar, first contemplated the waters of Israel, and even after experiencing their vivifying and health-giving influence, still pleaded for the use of a 'tis but, saying, "When I bow down in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." Again, in the case of Saul, who having spared the herds and flocks of the Amalekites, answered the prophet's reproof with "tis only to sacrifice to the Lord thy God." In all these instances each might have said, 'tis but a little one, 'tis but to bow, 'tis but to sacrifice, and thereby have sought impunity for his sin. But whatever indulgences idolatry or superstition may permit to their votaries, there are no dispensations issued by the moral law. He that offends in one joint is guilty of all. Thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them. Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the load of rams.

In considering the use which is made of this dangerous little palliative in early life by the thoughtless and careless, as respects the concerns of eternity, how awful and affecting may be its consequences! 'Tis but my tenth or fourteenth year may some foolish young person be disposed to say, and therefore time enough to think of death and the grave, of heaven and the world to come. But know you not that man cometh up as a flower and is cut down? In the morning it springeth up and flourisheth—the evening—how often before the noon, it is cut down and withered. Or even should life be prolonged, how many are its cares and its trials, how many where shall you go in the day of need for comfort and sympathy, if in youth you seek not an interest in Him who is "The Friend of the friendless and the faint?" He loves them that love him, and they that seek him early shall find him. Let your young affections be fixed upon him now—now let the desires of your heart run forth towards him. In prayer, in praise, in

the study of holiness, in searching the scriptures seek for him in youth. For if he have said, I am sought of them that asked not for me, and found of them that sought me not, how much more will he reveal himself to those who seek him with their young hearts, with the first aspirations of their souls!

Many plead for improper indulgences, by saying, 'tis but this once; by which means they create an evil habit, which may afterwards prove destructive to the soul. And a 'tis but as to time—it has been remarked, has led to procrastination and fearful consequences.

Temptations and trials present themselves to all. Young Christians, therefore, in such circumstances, should have their minds strengthened by the contemplation of great examples, these are to be found in abundance in the Holy Scriptures. In the history of the church also they are not wanting, and often present themselves in circumstances of peril, to which we in our happier days have no hazard of being exposed. Think then my young friends of the conduct of the first believers in the midst of persecution, proscription, torture, and death. Recall to mind how impotent was the whole pressure, of the whole power, of the mightiest authority that ever ruled on earth, to compel the Roman Christian to say, 'tis but—" 'Tis but two grains of incense cast upon the altar of the idol, and the sword of the persecutor will be sheathed." These two grains of incense no human urgency could extract from him. The power of man may crush the bones and muscles of its victim, or lacerate the fibres of his heart; but it cannot touch the indomitable will; it cannot sever the soul from its purpose: it cannot separate between the spirit and its God. His soul was supported by strength superior to that of man, by the omnipotence of his Saviour. Hence comes the heavenly energy—the fearless faith—the blanchless courage—the fixed resolve.—Neither precedents nor dominions have power over these, and the Christian with the Apostle, exclaims, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." *Phil. iv. 13.*

#### THE TRUE FRIEND.

"FRIENDSHIP improves happiness and abates misery, by doubling our joys and dividing our griefs."  
 "How valuable is a true friend!" said Amelia to her mamma, as they walked in the shrubbery—"I have often heard my dear papa say to you, 'there are very few real friends in the world.'"  
 "Yes my dear Amelia, your papa only mentioned what all will experience, if they live long enough. True friends grow not on every bough, and they are truly happy who possess them, for they contribute greatly to the comfort and happiness of human life.

"Without a friend  
 The world is but a wilderness."

"But, mamma, why are true friends so scarce?"  
 "There are so many qualities necessary in the composition of a friend, that it is difficult to find them in one and the same individual. A friend should be disinterested, warmly attached, wise and virtuous, of an open and ingenious disposition, faithful in giving and receiving advice: tender, generous, and sympathizing; entitled to great confidence, an enemy to slander and insinuation, and fixed and unchangeable in his regard. Mr. Collier remarks—"We should keep four things open to a friend; our heart, our counte-

nance, our house, and, as far as we prudently can, our purse.' I could add more, but you will see, my child, that there are but few who possess these requisites, and hence the scarcity of faithful friends.

"Pray mamma, have I not seen letters addressed to you, subscribed, your sincere friend, your attached friend?"

"You have my dear; but this is often done more from *cliquette*, than from reality, and we ought not to suspect such persons of insincerity, until we have proved them to be false.

"I remember many instances of friendship in the course of my reading. 'No doubt, those of David and Jonathan, and Damon and Pythias, and many others, are delightful instances of sincere and unalterable attachment. And there are no doubt at the present time, many cases of a similar nature."

"I am glad to hear you say so, for I have thought very often what I would give to have a real friend."

"Well! Amelia, now what would you give?"

"Give? Mamma, I would give a hundred pounds if I had that sum."

"A hundred pounds, child, why you forget what Dr. Young says:—

*A world in purchase of a friend is gain.*  
 "Well, I would give the world then, if I could have a true, affectionate, sincere friend"

"I could tell you where you might find such a friend; one that would never deceive you; who would love you tenderly; help you in all your difficulties, comfort you in all your afflictions and troubles; and what is more, provide for you here, and ensure your future happiness."

"Oh! mamma, what is the name of that friend? Is it a lady?"

"No."

"A gentleman! where does he live?"  
 "I suppose, Amelia, that you, like Cowper, would go and see him directly."

"That I would, without losing a moment. I would go this very night."

"He would rejoice in your visit, but he would require more for his friendship, than you would, I fear, be disposed to give."

"Oh! mamma, do tell me. Is he your friend and papa's friend?"

"I trust, my dear, he is—We are receiving many things from him every day. Indeed we have nothing but what came from him."

"What will he require of me?"

"Your heart, your soul, your all."

"Ah! dear mamma, I know what Friend you mean; it is Jesus Christ."

"The very same, he is the FRIEND, the only able, constant, everlasting Friend." One that abideth faithful and cannot deny himself. Happy should I be, my dear child to see you earnestly seeking the friendship of the Lord Jesus Christ. O what a Friend is he to poor guilty sinners! To save them He left heaven and came into our world, became a man of sorrows, and died on the accursed tree! Herein is love—disinterested love—love beyond thought. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is a merciful and faithful High Priest, his heart is always full of tenderness. He is the unsearchable gift. All the riches of grace and glory are open for the supply of the wants of his people. Go to Him, dear Amelia, go to night. The sooner you go to Him, the sooner you will be happy. Come let us sing that sweet hymn of Mr. Newton."