

"BE SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT."

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That was the affirmation, and application to a particular case, of a truth that may be affirmed universally. It is a fixed principle of Eternal Justice. Antecedent and consequent. Every man's sin will find him out some time or other.

I. Even now, in this life where, for obvious, wise, and merciful reasons, sentence against an evil work is not always executed speedily, and never to the full extent of the penalty; there are not many things more certain than the detection, sooner or later, and the punishment in some way, of wickedness.

The great criminal rarely escapes from the grasp of human law; when he does, he more surely withers under the curse of the Divine Law, which has its hold upon him, and its agents in the conscience within, and the overruling Providence about him. In some instances, through grievous defects in our social morality, in others, through the imperfections of the law, or failure of its officers, 'the villain goes unwhipped of justice,' but he does not elude the All Seeing, nor break the bands wherewith the Almighty holds him fast.—This is remarkably exemplified—sometimes in the tortures of the wretch goaded by an evil conscience and haunted by terrors, till he voluntarily seeks relief and revenge upon himself by the aid of the law he has outraged, or by self-inflicted punishment:—and sometimes the justice of God is just as plainly indicated by the growing obduracy of the miscreant's heart—his increasing aptitude for wickedness, and the equally increasing infatuation with which he proceeds to further enormities, to fill up for himself a larger measure of wrath, to be meted out to him yet with accumulated execration here, or to overwhelm his degraded soul in the hereafter of righteous retribution.

In common life, nothing is more matter of observation and consciousness, than that evil-thinking and evil-doing produce personal unhappiness, and social wrong and misery; they

are inseparably connected with blame-worthiness and suffering.

In the spiritual life, every one imbued with religious sentiments, knows that sin committed has a painful and dangerous following; that it stamps upon the conscience a sense of guiltiness, and entails a meed of sorrow, and often causes something like a felt necessity for sinning more.

A very slight exercise of reflection, with the knowledge and experience common to us all, might convince the person who is making light of sin, mis-naming it, and under-estimating its power, that he is engaged in a very useless as well as a very bad business. Sin will be itself in him and others in spite of his real or assumed incredulity: and sin, notwithstanding its deceitfulness, cannot always conceal the fact, even from him, that it is a deadly evil: it finds him out, and when it does, he owns in self-reproach, in shame and anguish, that "the way of transgressors is hard."

Of the hypocrite again it may be said, No man puts himself to more pains to less purpose, as no man takes more pains for a worse purpose. Most pitiable sight it is to witness the ghastly efforts made by such an one to appear before his fellows what he is not; and to think of God looking at him! Moreover this labour is entirely lost, serves only to bind the deceiver more securely to the doom of the liar: rarely does he pass through the world unsuspected and unmasked: in most cases, he is the object of distrust and pity, when he is not the object of contempt and ridicule.

Facts like these bring corroborative testimony to the doctrine of final and special retribution advanced in Scripture. They furnish, by analogy necessarily incomplete, an evidence, and perhaps a representation of that which will take place at last, in sight of the universe. We rather *suspect* and *dislike* this, than *believe* it. Yet even the suspicion begets, in thoughtful moments, uneasy apprehensions