

while their heart is far from him"—all who have never bowed the knee in broken-hearted sorrow, and are yet crying, Peace, peace! to their imperilled and unhappy souls—all who repine at another's elevation, or are envious of another's good, while they deem their own virtues so unmistakable, and their own excellence so manifest, as to silence all gainsayers—they are the elder brothers. Perhaps—let us come closer—there is very much of his image in ourselves. It is said that when a company of German divines were discussing this parable, and various conjectures were hazarded as to the identity of this elder son, a devout but eccentric brother, on being applied to for his opinion, said—"I know, for I learned it yesterday. *It is myself!* for I fretted and murmured because such an one had an extraordinary baptism of the Holy Spirit from on high." Oh for the spirit of searching, to discover and to exorcise the demon!

But there is mercy even for the elder son. The Father entreats still; and his censoriousness and hypocrisy, as well as his impatience and estrangement, may be freely and graciously forgiven. The grand jubilate with which the chapter closes forbids us to despair of any. It is meet that God should save them, and that the whole ransomed universe should exult over the pardoned sinner. Mercy! joy because of mercy! These are the latest notes of the spirit-psalm