

phenomena of thought and feeling and motive. And yet, with all the unequalled facilities for acquiring this sort of knowledge, can it be questioned that it is the one sort of knowledge that is most commonly neglected; and that, even amongst those who would disdain the imputation of ignorance in history or science or literature, there are multitudes who have never acquired the merest rudiments of the knowledge of Self?

What has now been stated as to the too common neglect of self-knowledge in general, is emphatically true with respect to that branch of it to which the text relates. It is the moral part of our nature with reference to which defective knowledge is at once the most common and the most dangerous. As a matter of curiosity, an object of interesting study, every intelligent man should know something of the structure, organization, laws, and processes of his physical and of his intellectual nature; but as a matter, not of curious interest merely, but of the last and highest necessity, we ought to be acquainted with our moral nature—with the condition of our hearts in the sight of God. The care of our bodily health we may depute to another, and the skill of the physician may render our ignorance of physiology of little or no practical moment; to be unacquainted even with our intellectual nature, inobservant of its operations and mistaken as to its character, may lead to no consequences more serious than vanity, self-conceit, an undue reliance on our own opinions;—but when our ignorance relates not to the body but to the soul, not to the head but to the heart, no language can exaggerate its danger. For the care of our spiritual health, the moral culture and discipline of the soul, we can never depute to another; no friend on earth can be the soul's physician, or free us from the burden of our solitary responsibility with regard to it; and unnoticed errors in the heart, unlike intellectual deficiencies, not merely affect our temporal condition or our social reputation, but may issue in our eternal ruin.

Yet the text suggests, what all experience corroborates, that it is a man's moral defects that are most likely to elude his own scrutiny. There is a peculiar secrecy, an inherent inscrutability, about our sins. Bodily disease or injury, in the great major-

ity of cases, manifests its presence by pain—so obtrudes itself on our consciousness, that it is impossible for the sick man to be long unaware of his danger, or indifferent to its removal. But it is the peculiar characteristic of moral disease, that it does its deadly work in secret. Sin is a malady which affects the very organ by which itself can be detected; it creates the darkness amid which it injures us, and blinds the eyes of its victim in the very act of destroying him. If there be any bodily disease to which it is analogous, it is to that fatal malady which often cheats the sick man into a delusive tranquillity, the deeper and more deceitful in proportion to his danger. And if the unconscious cheerfulness of the dying be sometimes both strange and sad; if it has ever happened to us, as we looked on the wan and wasted countenance on which consumption had set its ghastly seal, to listen with mingled wonder and pity to the words of unabated hopefulness from the sick man's lips, surely more deserving of our pity is he who, all unaware of his spiritual disease, is hastening on, in undisturbed tranquillity and self-satisfaction, to everlasting despair and death!

Now, it is this self-concealing tendency of sin, and the consequent difficulty of forming a right estimate of ourselves, to which the Psalmist refers in the prayer of the text—"Who can understand his errors?—Cleanse thou me from secret faults!" And what I now purpose, in following out the train of thought here suggested, is to point out to you a few of the causes or considerations which serve to explain the self-ignorance of the erring and sinful mind.

I. One reason why the sinful man does not "understand his errors" is—*That sin can be truly measured only when it is resisted.* It is impossible to estimate the strength of the principle of evil in the soul till we begin to struggle with it; and the careless or sinful man—the man who, by supposition, is not striving with, but succumbing to sin, cannot know its force. So long as evil reigns unopposed within the soul, it will reign, in a great degree, unobserved. So long as a man passively and thoughtlessly yields up his will to the sway of worldly principles or unholy desires and habits, he is in no condition to measure their intensity—scarcely to discover their existence. For in this, as in many other