

“ O, Pilate hadst thou mark'd my prayer,  
That guiltless blood to shield and spare,  
That deed of horror would not be  
A stain of thine, a curse to thee.”

But he vacillated. At last, having made a few abortive efforts to dissuade the mob from their purpose, he yielded to their turbulent demand, and, in violation of his official integrity, committed Jesus to their mercy. But, observe, *he did not mean to meet the consequences of his act*. In presence of the multitude he washed his hands, saying “ I am innocent of the blood of this just person ; see ye to it.” But it was no use. Pilate was soon recalled to Rome, whence he was afterwards banished to Gaul, where he died by his own hand.

We see similar efforts to evade the consequences of voluntary acts, every day. The sinner finds some one who stands nearer to the issue of his act than he does, and seeks to fix the blame on him. He interjects a *link* between himself and the outcome of his deed, and tries to fasten the responsibility there. So Judas, in the betrayal, operated through the Scribes and Pharisees, and sought thus to escape. But it was of no avail. The thought of his crime, like a grim, relentless spectre, conjured up by some magic wand, stood by to ring in his ears :—“ Thou art the man.” At length, forced by remorse, he flung down the purchase money and cried, “ I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood ;” and went and hanged himself. We see proof of the same repugnance to the pressure of responsibility in the attempt which the sinner makes to refer the occasion of his sin to an unfortunate constitution. “ I was delivered to this,” he says, “ I came into the world with a dip of the needle that led me astray in the storms of passion, I could not help it.”

But all will not do. Deep down beneath all the Sophistries, and all the pleas, and all the excuses, and all the rotten philosophy, is the feeling—a feeling that the sinner can never get rid of, that he himself must answer for his deeds. The integrity of the divine government demands it; for the divine administration is inexplicable upon any other assumption. The invariable law of conscience demands it, for no man ever yet felt remorse for well-doing, and the man remains to be found whose *conscience* ever approved of disobedience to God. No, that spark never quite dies out in this life; that voice is never *quite* hushed amid the uproar of sin and passion. It may grow feebler and fainter, like the dying away of the echo among the mountains, but to the brink of the grave will it demand. “ The father shall not be delivered for the Son, nor the Son for the father, but the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” “ Every one shall give an account of his own deeds, whether they have been good or whether they have been bad.”