

CHEERFULNESS.

I would not be understood as speaking one word, no not a syllable, against cheerfulness, a sober and well regulated mirth; for it is not only allowed by God, which is enough to prove its lawfulness, but also commanded, which renders it a duty.— Eat thy bread with a merry heart, rejoice with the wife of thy youth, yea and of thy age too. And Paul doubles the precept, 'Rejoice evermore; and again I say, Rejoice;' and the Psalmist tells us, 'Praise is comely for the upright.' Not complaints, but songs; not always prayer, but praise. The garment of praise is the beautiful garment which sits most neatly upon a saint's back; and with this they shall be invested when taken up to glory, and admitted into the joy of their lord.— And this I desire them to consider who please themselves in a dejected, melancholic temper, and who think they never look well and as becomes them, unless it be when they have a cloud upon their countenances and tears trickling down their cheeks; and if ever they would speak properly, it must be in sighs. I wonder who told them so; it must be no other than the devil, who is an inveterate and implacable enemy as to their holiness, so their peace and comfort. Sure I am that alacrity and cheerfulness is your friend, and promotes the health of your bodies, and furthers the lively, vigorous motions of your souls in their most noble employments. It is health to your navels, and marrow to your bones, and oil to your wheels.

And this is also sure, that cheerfulness doth *become you*. It is most becoming, because more proper for you; most suitable to that God who is your Father—to that Jesus who is your Head and Husband—to that covenant upon which you have laid hold—to those promises in which you are interested—to those hopes under which you are planted—and to that safe, sweet, blessed state into which you by grace are brought. And that it doth become you is evident from hence, because it doth belong to you. Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart; and it is fit you should reap that which Heaven's hand hath sown for you. There are no persons in the world that have such a right and title to joy as be-

lievers have; wicked men, indeed, have none at all; no, though they be rich, yet they are commanded 'to weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon them;' (James v. 1). For a temporal heaven they shall have an eternal hell.

And further it is sure that cheerfulness is one way to *commend religion to others*. The world is mistaken about it, and hath taken up a wrong notion of it, which it holds fast,—namely, that it is a dull, heavy, moping, and melancholic thing; that it is morose and ill natured, an enemy to manners and mirth; but that is a false notion, a grand mistake. It doth not forbid cheerfulness, but directs and orders it. It teacheth men to be merry and wise; and I do heartily wish all that cheerfulness were quite banished which is inconsistent with the rules and principles of our religion. They would be far better without it. What need is there of that laughter which Solomon called madness, or what good comes of it? Away with all that jesting which the Scripture calls *vain*. It is a sad thing for men to love jesting and after that go to hell in earnest. You will find it best to be merry and religious. *Res severa est verum gaudium*.—True joy is a severe, grave, and serious thing; and let that measure your days. Let there be lightness, but nothing of lightness; solidity, but no froth. Let your families be witnesses of your integrity, and see nothing in your conversation that is below understanding men, nothing unworthy of gracious Christians.—(Slater, 1694.)

THE POWER OF A WORD.

One day a boy was tormenting a kitten when his little sister said to him, with tearful eyes, "Oh, Philip, don't do that; it is God's kitten." The words of the little one were not lost; they were set upon wheels. Many serious thoughts were awakened in his mind regarding the creature he had before considered his own property "God's kitten—God's creature—for He made it." It was a new idea. The next day, on his way to school, he met one of his companions, beating unmercifully a poor starved looking dog. "Don't do that," said Philip, using almost unconsciously his sister's words; "It is God's creature." The boy looked ashamed, and explained that the