

FOR THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

THE UNPROFITABLENESS OF SIN, EVEN IN THIS LIFE, AN ARGUMENT FOR REPENTANCE.

Every rational mind must be convinced, from a fair consideration of the evils, which, even in this life, are the usual consequences of sin, that virtuous measures are more likely than vicious ones, to promote temporal prosperity. For, upon proper enquiry, every man will find, not only within the sphere of his own observation, but from the testimony of history, in all ages and nations of the world, that instances of successful vice have ever been so rare, in comparison with the cases, in which virtue has led to success, that the balance is greatly in favour of the latter.

If the records of our city and circuit courts of justice be examined, and the list of criminals, who, in the course of a generation, have suffered the penalty of the laws, be reckoned up; it will not, I think, be denied, that the amount will far exceed in number, the cases of prosperous guilt, which the history of the same period can produce. But to this list of criminals punished, ought to be added the numerous instances of offenders, who escape the punishment of the law, and of those whose offences are of that nature, of which the law cannot take cognizance.

Let him who denies that misfortune is generally the consequence of vice, take a survey of the population of large cities. Let him visit in succession, the prosperous and the wretched, and acquaint himself with their private history: then let him declare where he has found the greater number of vicious persons,—in the hovels of the indigent and half-starved poor, or in the splendid abodes of wealth and luxury? For every instance of ruined vice, exhibited in "tattered weeds," pallid cheeks, and emaciated form, which "sharp misery" seems to have "worn to the very bone," can he produce a well-dressed, ruddy citizen, [or stately older man, "in fair round belly with good capon lined,"] that has made his fortune by his villainy? Alas! our hospitals and our gaols, and other abodes of suffering guilt,—taverns, gambling houses, &c. and even the very corners of the streets, afford unanswerable proof of the wretchedness of vice. Nor can it be supposed that the case has been materially different in other ages and countries. Could, then, any man in his senses adopt these measures to attain success, which experience has shewn to be generally inadequate, in preference to those, which have generally been found to effect the end proposed? Could he be considered a reasonable man, who should act in opposition to the dictates of reason and experience? As a skilful gamester calculates upon certain principles, the chances of his game, and does not expect to win if those chances are against him; so a wise man will not expect success in life, by the employment of vicious means, which, he is assured, have failed much oftener than they have succeeded, to procure the desired object.

Again:—Sin not only fails, in most cases, of procuring success; but in the few instances in which it is successful, this success is often but temporary, and the succeeding misery which at last overtakes the sinner, is aggravated in proportion to the height of prosperity, from which he has fallen, and the length of time that he has escaped unpunished. And this observation applies equally to individuals and to nations. The histories of Richard III. of England, and of the Emperor Napoleon in our own times, and a thousand other instances, ancient and modern, are proofs of the short-lived honors which are to be attained by unprincipled conduct, and of the retributive justice, which sooner or later, awards the due punishment of guilt. The Canaanites, the Jews, and the surrounding heathen nations, long indulged by the mercy of God, and at last destroyed by his just vengeance, strikingly exhibit the evil consequences of national sin and impenitence.

And further:—As sin generally leads to punishment, but rarely to any advantages, and those, for the most part, temporary; so it may safely be asserted, that when, by sinful practices, a man has acquired property or power, and retained it unmolested to the end of his days, which very rarely happens, it proves to him rather a source of misery than of enjoyment. For the stings of conscience which the most hardened sinner feels; the fear of punish-

ment from both God and man, whose laws he has transgressed; the tyranny of his evil passions which he has indulged, must poison the enjoyment of every earthly blessing. Remorse, that "worm which dieth not," torments his lonely hours, and he can expect no sympathy or comfort from society, which his selfishness has injured. Oliver Cromwell is the most eminent example of successful villainy which the history of our country affords. But who could wish to be his imitator? His prosperity, though continued to the end of his days, was only apparent. His life was embittered by domestic troubles; the detestation of his friends, and of all mankind; by remorse of conscience, and all that train of imaginary dangers, which mock the fears of the guilty. Colonel Gardiner, while in possession of all the advantages which vicious prosperity could confer, and at the very time when he appeared the gayest and happiest of men, is said to have been so destitute of all real enjoyments, that he wished he had been a dog!

Man is a social being, and greatly dependent on his fellow-man for the success of all his undertakings. But a vicious man is an enemy to society; his hand is against every man, therefore every man's hand will be against him. On the contrary, the virtuous will ever receive the hearty co-operation and assistance of others, because they are sensible that by promoting his views, they promote the common interests of society.

God, who is perfectly just, holy, and the very essence of virtue, must be supposed to regard with peculiar favour, in the distribution of his benefits, those whom he loves. This may be proved by innumerable precepts and examples in the Old and New Testament, as well as by the light of reason, and the wisdom of experience.

Man is endowed with an internal power,—the power of conscience, which procures peace of mind, the greatest earthly blessing, to him who practises virtue; but remorse and misery when he is guilty of sin: so that happiness, from the very constitution of our nature, is the consequence of virtue, and misery the consequence of vice. Thus it appears that virtue, not vice, is the source of real prosperity. By virtuous conduct a man gains the applause of men, the favour of God, the approbation of his own conscience. The good are the only description of persons, who are likely to obtain prosperity, and the only persons who can possibly enjoy it, after it is obtained. Thus it is affirmed by the Apostle Paul, that "Godliness with contentment is great gain." That honesty is the best policy, has become a proverbial expression; and the same opinion is expressed by Blair, when he says, "the vigour which virtue gives the mind; the weight which it adds to character; the generous sentiments which it breathes; the undaunted spirit which it inspires; the ardor of diligence which it quickens; the freedom which it procures from pernicious and dishonorable pursuits, are the foundation of all that is highly honorable, or greatly successful among men."

Since, therefore, it appears that sin rarely contributes to prosperity; that when it does, this prosperity is, in general, temporary, and always a source of misery to its possessor; since, on the contrary, it has been shown, that virtue is the true and only certain source of prosperity; and since these propositions have been proved by the observation and experience of mankind, by the light of reason, by the opinions of wise men, and by the infallible word of God, the conclusion is inevitable,—that "the unprofitableness of sin, even in this life, is a convincing argument for renouncing sin, and for leading a godly, a righteous and a sober life."

J. L. A.

NEW THEORY.

Mr. Editor,

I have recently met with a pamphlet entitled, "A Review of High Church and Arminian Principles," first published in the Christian Spectator and re-published in the City of Hartford. Attracted by the title, I have hastily read the pamphlet, and among many other very strange things which it contains, I found a theory as to the effect produced upon a community, by preaching the truth, which struck me as entirely new. It is ad-