

the attention, the most precious of the intellectual habits, mankind differ greatly; but every man possesses some, and it will increase the more it is exerted. He who exercises no discipline over himself, in this respect, acquires such a volatility of mind, such a vagrancy of imagination, as dooms him to be the sport of every mental vanity. It is impossible such a man should attain to true wisdom. If we cultivate, on the contrary, a habit of attention, it will become natural. Thought will strike its roots deep, and we shall by degrees, experience no difficulty in following the track of the largest connected discourse, as we find it easy to attend to what interests the heart, and the thoughts naturally follow the affections. The best antidote to habitual inattention to religious instruction, is the love of the truth, "Let the word of truth dwell in you richly:" and to hear it attentively, will be a pleasure: not a task. The practice of sleeping in places of worship, (a practice, we believe, not prevalent in any other places of public resort,) is not only a gross violation of the advice we are giving, but most distressing to ministers, and most disgraceful to those who indulge in it. If the Apostle indignantly enquires of the Corinthians, whether they had houses to eat and to drink in, may we not with equal propriety, ask those who indulge in this practice, whether they have not beds to sleep in, that they convert the house of God into a dormitory. A little self-denial, a very gentle restraint on the appetite, would in most cases, put a stop to this abomination: and with what propriety can he pretend to desire the sincere milk of the word, who cannot be prevailed upon, one day out of seven, to refrain from the intemperance which absolutely disqualifies him for receiving it.

FOURTHLY.—Hear the word of God with impartiality. The indulgence of a nice and fastidious taste, is as adverse to the improvement of the hearer, as it is to the comfort of the minister, considering the variety of our avocations. The necessity we are under of addressing you in all states of mind, and sometimes on the most unexpected occasions—if we could not rely on your candour, our situation would be scarcely tolerable. When the general tendency of a discourse is good, and the instruction delivered, weighty and solid, it is the part of candour to overlook imperfections in the composition or elocution of the speaker; imitating in this respect, the example of the Galatians, of whom St. Paul testified, that they did not despise his temptation, which was in the flesh. The Lord, by the Prophet Isaiah, severely censures such as make a "a man an offender for a word;" a fault too prevalent in some places of worship, especially among such as are the least informed: for the disposition to sit in judgment on the orthodoxy, and talent of ministers, is exactly in an inverse proportion to the ability. Be not hasty in concluding that a minister is erroneous, because he may chance to use a word or phrase not exactly suited to your taste or comprehension; it is very possible that the idea it is intended to convey, may perfectly accord with your own sentiments; but there is a fault in you, your perceptions are not clear; and if it should not, it is equally probable that the propriety of it may be vindicated by considerations, with which you are not acquainted. "Be not many mas-

ters, many teachers," saith St. James, "knowing ye shall receive the greater condemnation." Hear the word of God, less in the spirit of judges, than of those who shall be judged by it. If you are not conscious of your need of instruction, why attend the place appointed for that purpose? But if you are, how inconsistent it is, to indulge that spirit of cavil and censure, which can have no other effect, than to pain your ministers in the discharge of their duty. In most congregations, there are one or more persons who value themselves on their skill in detecting the unsoundness of ministers; and who, when they hear, attend, less with a view of spiritual improvement, than to pass their verdict, which they expect to be received as decisive. It is almost unnecessary to add, that they usually consist of the most ignorant and conceited part of the society. Such a disposition should as much as possible, be discouraged and suppressed. "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." Despise not men of plain talents, who preach the truth, and appear to have your eternal welfare at heart. If you choose to converse with your fellow Christians, on what you have been hearing, (a practice which, if rightly conducted, may be very edifying), let your conversation turn more upon the tendency, the spiritual beauty, and glory of these great things of God, which have engaged your attention, than on the merit of the preacher. We may readily suppose that Cornelius and his friends, after hearing St. Peter, employed very few words in discussing the oratorical talents of the great Apostle, any more than three thousand, who on the day of Pentecost were pricked to the heart; their minds were too much occupied with the momentous truths they had been listening to, to have room for such reflections; yet this is the only kind of religious conversation, (if it deserves the appellation,) in which too many profess to engage. "Give me," says the incomparable Fenelon, "the preacher who imbues my mind with such a love of the word of God, as makes me desirous of hearing it from any mouth." When your ministers are exposing a practical evil, and endeavouring to deter from it, by the motives which reason and revelation supply; guard against a suspicion of their being personal. That they ought not to be so, we readily admit; that is, that they ought not to descend to such a minute specification of circumstances, as shall naturally direct the attention to one or more individuals. But if they are not at liberty to point their arrows against the particular vices among them; or one expected, (lest they wound one or two) to make a courteous apology, by assuring the audience, of their hope and conviction that none among them are implicated, they had better seal their lips in perpetual silence; they had better never have had "a dispensation of the Gospel committed unto them." It is therefore a most indispensable part of our office to warn sinners of every description, to enforce sound doctrine, and that he may not "beat the air" to attack particular sins, as well as sin in the abstract; to explain particular doctrines, and, if without our intending it, an individual suspects he is personally aimed at, he merely bears an involuntary testimony to our folly and skill, or to his own want of good understanding,

(To be concluded next No.)