

difference, unbounded in all wishes, and disgusted after all possession, is a spectacle of human misery that would enhance the peace of a true Christian, did all the influence of a divine religion not infuse into his heart as much pity for his mistaken brethren, as it does superior dignity and elevation into his sentiments.

But without pursuing this character any further, of which, I would please myself in thinking there are some living illustrations before me, I beg leave to observe, in nearer conformity with my text, that, as self-love is the most active principle of the human soul, and to seek our own wealth or happiness is to obey an innate and irresistible impulse, neither reason nor religion go to hinder or discourage a just and reasonable attention to our own temporal interests; nor should any of the Gospel precepts be explained in a manner which is inconsistent with that eternal law, which the finger of God hath traced on our hearts. No. Attention to our concerns can become culpable only when they so far enslave and engross us as to leave us neither leisure nor inclination to promote the happiness of our fellow-creatures. Then does self-love degenerate into selfishness. This, indeed, is a dark and melancholy transformation of our natural character, and the last term of its abasement.

When the light of benevolence is entirely put out, man is reduced to that state of existence which is disavowed by nature and abhorred by God! Let one suppose him, I say, but once radically divested of all generous feelings, and entirely involved in himself; it will be impossible to say what deeds of horror and shame he will not readily commit in the balance of his perverted judgment, honor, gratitude, friendship, religion, yea, even natural affection will all be outweighed by interest. The maxim of the Roman satirist will be his rule of life, "Money at any rate." If the plain and beaten paths of the world, diligence and frugality, will conduct him to that end, it is well; but if not, rather than fail of his object, I will be bold to say, he will plunge, without scruple or remorse, into the most serpentine labyrinths of frauds and iniquity. While his schemes are accomplished, fretfulness and discontent will lower on his brow! when favorable, and even most prosperous, his unslaked and unsatisfied soul still thirsts for more. As he is insensible to the calamities of his fellow-creatures, so the greatest torment he can experience is an application to his charity and compassion. Should he stumble, like the Levite, on some spectacle of woe, he will, like the Levite, hasten to the other side of the way, resist the finest movements of nature, and cling to the demon of inhumanity, as the guardian angel of his happiness. Suppose him, however, under the accidental necessity of listening to the petition of misery; he will endeavor to beat down the evidence of the case by the

meanest shifts and evasions; or will cry aloud, as the brutal and insatiable Nabal did to the hungry soldiers of David, "Why should I be such a fool as to give my flesh, which I have prepared for my shearers, to men that I know not whence they be?"

But admitting that a remnant of shame, for example, in a congregation like this, may goad him for once to an act of beneficence, so mean and inconsiderable, so unworthy of the great concern would it probably be, that the idol of his soul would appear more distinctly in the very relief he administers, than in the barbarous insensibility which habitually withholds it. Merciful and eternal God! what a passion! And how much ought the power and fascination of that object to be dreaded, which can turn the human heart into a pathless and irreclaimable desert. Irreclaimable, I say; for men, inflamed with any other passion, even voluptuousness, the most impure and inveterate, are sometimes enlightened and reformed by the ministry of religion, or the sober and deliberate judgment of manhood and experience.

But who will say that such a wretch as I have described, in the extremity of selfishness, was ever corrected by any ordinary resource or expedient? Who will say that he is at any time vulnerable by reproach, or, I had almost added, even converted by grace? No; through every stage and revolution of life, he remains invariably the same; or if any difference, it is only that as he advances into the shade of a long evening, he clings closer and closer to the object of his idolatry; and while every other passion lies dead and blasted in his heart, his desire for more self increases with renewed eagerness, and he holds by a sinking world with an agonizing grasp, till he drops into the earth with the increased curse of wretchedness on his head, without the tribute of a tear from child or parent, or any inscription on his memory; but that he lived to counteract the distributive justice of Providence, and died without hope or title to a blessed immortality. "Seek not your own, but every man another's wealth."

That there are few examples of such a passion, I will readily admit. So abominable an infatuation is too far out of the line of nature ever to become extensive in its influence. But if avarice be rare, Mammon has still numerous, very numerous adorers of another description; and allow me to ask, What great difference does it make to the prolific order of human misery, whether it be spurned by a heart of adamant, or not relieved by those who live splendidly and luxuriously? Here, my friends, is, I fear, the true state of the case. Can it be denied that a passion for splendid luxury begets an attachment to money, as a means of gratifying that passion? Who will deny that it sometimes leads to the most shameful degradation of the human character? Is it not well known that a man