

triot who set his heart on abolishing the slave trade, and after twenty years of rebuffs and revilings, of tantalized hope and disappointed effort, at last succeeded, achieved a greater work than if he had set afloat all possible schemes of philanthropy, and then left them, one after the other, to sink or swim. So short is life, that we can afford to lose none of it in abortive undertakings; and once we are assured that a given work is one which it is worth our while to do, it is true wisdom to set about it instantly; and once we have begun it, is true economy to finish it.

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Duncan, Donald, and the Elder.

E.—I am very glad to see you both. I am indeed happy. Donald, that you accompanied your neighbour to spend an hour or two with me, and I hope that whether or not we agree in our views, we shall not part displeased with one another.

Don.—I promised Duncan I would come with him, and I always make a point of keeping my promise.

E.—I am glad to hear you say so. The man who can say that he always makes a point of keeping his promise, says, indeed, a good deal for himself.

Don.—I despise the man who does not feel himself bound to remember his promises. People may talk about religion, and pretend to be very zealous, and make long prayers, and speak of sending Bibles and missionaries to the heathen; but for my part, I would like to see, first, so much religion among themselves as to save me the annoyance of having to deal with men whom I cannot trust.

E.—I do not doubt but you may have met with individuals of the character you have described. The number, however, I hope, was not large. There were always in christian communities some who were influenced by a different spirit from that which they possessed, and there were also large numbers who, though sincere, were weak and erring, and whose lives, in many things, seemed very inconsistent with their profession. But while this was so, the effect it always had, on the real friends of Christ, was to fill their minds with grief, and urge them more earnestly to pray for their brethren and for themselves. No true follower of Christ was ever heard speaking with contempt of his brethren because of their imperfections, nor did it tend to weaken the desire of such a man to extend the blessings of the gospel, that his neighbours were imperfect, and their lives—many of them—very unlike what they professed to believe. That was left for the enemies of Christ to do. They alone were inclined to do it.

Don.—I suppose, then, that I should close my eyes to the doings and actions of people, and just believe they are as good and sincere

as their words at a prayer meeting or a missionary meeting would have them to be. Some people would like that very well.

E.—My dear neighbour, you are by no means to suppose such a thing. The man who is really sincere at a prayer meeting, is so also in all the transactions of life. If you find such a man guilty of deliberate dishonesty—if you find, when he retires from religious duties, that he can take advantage of his neighbour, you are justified in not believing him sincere. But you must beware that his hypocrisy, whose dishonesty you thus know, does not lead you to suspect of the same insincerity those whom you do not know to be guilty as he is. You must also take care not to confound imperfection with want of sincerity. The best of men are but men at best. They are imperfect, and that imperfection goes with them, and shows itself in all they do. There is another thing you will allow me to say, for I fear you forget it, that there is great danger, to the interests of your own soul, in the habit of looking too eagerly after the faults and inconsistencies of others. You may be able to say a great deal against them that is all quite true, but when you have done so, whose conduct do you imitate in so acting? Do you not know who is called the accuser of the brethren?

Don.—If I say nothing but the truth, I am not ashamed who will hear it. I always say what I think. I am not one of those who can ever keep the same smiling face and bow to everything you say, while in their hearts they think the very opposite.

E.—It is true, we all should be careful that we never speak but the truth, but it does not follow that it is right always to say everything we believe to be true. This is especially the case when speaking of our brethren. It is not right, but highly wrong and sinful, to expose their faults and imperfections, except when duty sternly compels us to do so. Satan himself, whose malice makes him the accuser of the brethren, can frequently say just what you have now said, that he speaks only the truth when accusing. Too often, indeed, was he able to say very hard things against the servants of Christ, without requiring to have recourse to falsehood; but as he accused from malice, and not because he wished their good, he shewed the spirit of the devil just as plainly as when he defamed them falsely. So, if you adopt the habit of watching your neighbours and saying all the evil you believe true of them, you will be acting a similar part with that wicked spirit, whose dwelling shall be hell for ever and ever.

D.—Truly, we have all much need of having that solemn truth continually on our minds. Alas! we are too ready to forget it. But I interrupted you only to say that I fear you have both forgotten that the subject of our conversation, to-night, was to be the Foreign Mission Scheme, and its claims on our people.