

be limited and transient in their effects. If religion were indeed a mere abstraction of devotion, confined in its exercises to the closet or the sanctuary, and restricted in its influence to the imagination and the taste, but which has no necessary control over the conscience, the heart, and the life, and which is not allowed to regulate the intercourse of society: if it were merely the temper of the convent, united with the forms of the Church; beginning and ending upon the threshold of the house of God, then it would be difficult to point out what connection such a religion has with the welfare of a country. It would in this case resemble only the ivy, which, though it add a picturesque effect to the venerable fabric, imparts neither stability to its walls, nor convenience to its apartments. But if religion be indeed a principle of the heart, an element of the character, an inseparable habit of thinking, feeling, and acting, right in all our social relations: the basis of every virtue, and the main prop of every excellence; if it be indeed the fear of the Lord, by which men depart from evil; if it be faith working by love; if it be such a belief in the gospel of Christ, as leads to a conformity to his example; then we can easily perceive how such a religion as this conduces to the welfare of the country. There is not one single influence, whether of law, of science, of art, or of learning, that affects the well being of society, which true religion does not guard and strengthen. Take the summary of its duties, as it is expressed in the two great commandments of the law, supreme love to God, and equitable love to man; or take the direction of Paul, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, or if there be any praise, think of these things;" or take Peter's comprehensive circle of Christian duty, "Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the King." Here we see that religion though founded on a belief of doctrines and cherished by the exercises of devotion, diffuses its influences over the whole social character of man and through the whole range of society. It is the belief the love, the worship, the imitation, of a Deity whose moral attributes, when copied by us, as they ever will be where piety exists, form a character, in which sound morality is animated and sanctified by the spirit of true devotion.

Such a religion contains the germ of every social excellence, the seminal principle of every relative virtue: "It maintains an incessant struggle with whatever is selfish, barbarous, and inhuman; by unveiling fatuity, it clothes morality with a divine sanction, and harmonizes utility and virtue in every state of existence, and every combination of events." To man, in his individual capacity, it prescribes, not only the homage of God, but the duties of self-government and respect; it follows him into the domestic circle, the fellowship of the Church, the community of the country, the citizenship of the world; binding upon him the duties which are appropriate to every station, and calling him to acknowledge the claims which reach him from every quarter. As with the smiling countenance, and the flaming sword of the cherubim, it guards all the social interests of man, protecting the throne from the turbulence and anarchy of the people; and the rights of the people from the encroachments of the throne; the rich from the invasion and spoliation of the poor; the poor from the insults and oppression of the rich; it teaches justice to the master, and fidelity to the servant; ordains equity and truth, as the rules of commercial transactions; nerves the arm with industry, and melts the bosom to compassion; carries the authority of God into recesses too deep and distant to be reached by the institutes of human jurisprudence, and makes a man a law to himself amidst the urgency of temptation and the privacy of solitude. In short, there is not a single duty by which man can promote the welfare of society, which is not enjoined by religion; nor is there one evil influence which it does not oppose by the weight of its authority and the terror of its frown; it places society in the shadow of the eternal throne, draws over it the shield of omnipotence, and employs for the defence of its earthly interests, the thunder that issues from the clouds and thick darkness in which Jehovah dwells. That man must be a fool, and not a philosopher, whatever be his pretensions to learning or to science, who does not recognize in religion, the tutelary genius of his country, the ministering angel of the world.

Let it not be said, that virtue would do all this without religion, for who did natural virtue ever exist in the absence of religion? A land of atheists or even of deists is a dark and frightful spectacle, which the world has never yet been fated and afflicted to witness, and in all probability never will: it is easy to conceive, however, that in the absence of all these moral principles, those standards of duty, those examples of goodness contained in the Scriptures, and which are so essential to the right formation of character, such a land must be a scene of vice, and profligate crime. The only attempt that was ever made to introduce the reign of atheism to a country, was productive of such enormous vice, and such prodigious misery, that it excited the horror and was abhorred amidst the execrations of the whole social community.

No, it is religion alone that can preserve, much more extend that virtue, in which the well being of the country consists; and it is perfectly self evident that the universal prevalence of piety, would be necessarily followed with the universal reign of virtue; for virtue properly defined is not only a part of piety, but is piety itself. It has been finely demonstrated by Butler, in his immortal work, that the virtue of a people necessarily increases their strength and that the predominance in one, other things being equal, must ever be expected to produce superiority in the other.

And then there is another way besides its direct influence, in which piety leads to the prosperity and security of a land; I mean by the influence which it has in drawing down the blessing of God. If there be a moral governor of the universe, sin must provoke him, and holiness please him; if sin provoke God, he is able to punish it, for the destinies of nations are at his disposal, the balance of power is in his hand; bodies of men, as such, are rewardable and punishable only in this world as death dissolves all bonds, and reduces society to its elements, allowing the existence of neither families, Churches, nor nations in eternity. God's determination to punish guilty nations, and to bless virtuous ones, is recorded on the pages of Scripture, and confirmed by the details of history. Harken to the awful denunciations of Jehovah, "At what instant, I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil. I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a country and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them." And he has most awfully fulfilled these words. Where are Nineveh, and Babylon, and Tyre, and Athens, and Jerusalem, and ancient Rome? Vanished from the earth, except a few melancholy ruins, which lie, like their mouldering bones, around the grave's mouth, while the destroying angel, the spirit of desolation still lingers on their vast sepulchre, to proclaim for the admonition of the earth, "See, therefore, and know, that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against the Lord." Yes, and over other lands still numbered amongst living nations, do we not see the awful "image of jealousy" arising, and do we not hear an awful voice declaring, "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel, both with wrath and force, to lay the land desolate, and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine; and I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and I will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." It is in then, that ruins a kingdom, holiness that preserves it. O! my country, mayest thou have wisdom to know and value this true secret of national greatness; and to remember that there is no kingdom so high but vice will bring it down and lay it low, even in the dust none so humble, but virtue may raise it to the pinnacle of prosperity. Religion is the lock of thy strength, more than commerce or the arts, or martial prowess; and mayest thou never, never part with this, under the wiles of any seducing spirit, whether of false philosophy, infidelity, or immorality: for then shalt thou be seen like Sampson, when shorn of his hair, a miserable captive in the hands of the Philistines, and an object of sport to those

very enemies who had so often trembled and crouched under the power of his arm.

ANECDOTE OF A BLIND WIDOW.

In a small market town, in the country of Lancaster, there lived a pious, respectable woman, S. B. In the latter part of her pilgrimage, two calamities overtook her,—the loss of sight, and the loss of her husband. In one of my visits to her, I said alluding to her husband's death, "Sarah, I hope you are not a stranger to the comforts of religion, under your recent bereavement." Her reply was, "No, sir; I am as happy as I can expect to be on this side my better home." "On what is your happiness founded?" was the next question proposed to her. "From my childhood," said she, "I was fond of reading the Holy Scriptures. A gentleman, in whose service I lived many years, and who watched over my spiritual interests, perceiving my love to the Scriptures, presented me with a copy of Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible. This book I daily read, and with prayer. When any passage of Scripture impressed my mind, from which I derived instruction, or caution, or reproof I raised my heart to God in prayer. I said, 'Lord, write this scripture upon my heart! If I come at any time into circumstances which may render it useful to me, let me then possess it!' It now appears," she added, "as through God heard every petition; for here I sit, solitary, hour after hour, and day after day; but God is with me.—His promises, his cautions, his exhortations, and the examples of holy men, are brought so incessantly to my recollection, that God converses with me through the medium of his word; and I converse with Him: and thus I spend my days, happy, and waiting for for my change. I shall soon say,—

"The voyage of 'e's at an end,
The mortal affliction is past;
The age that in heaven I spend,
For ever and ever shall last."

Reader, set a high value upon the word of God; and read it with much prayer; so shall it be "a lamp to thy foot, and a light to thy path."

JOHN KEESHOW.

ANECDOTES OF REV. OLIVER HEYWOOD.

The following anecdotes of the Rev. Oliver Heywood, an ejected minister in Yorkshire, are taken from the "Nonconformists' Memorial."

Mr. Heywood, being reduced to great straits after the loss of his income, so that his children began to be impatient for want of food, called his servant Martha, (who would not desert the family in distress,) and said to her, "Martha, take a basket, and go to Mr. N., the shopkeeper, and ask him to lend me five shillings. If he is kind enough to do it, buy those things which you know we most want. The Lord give you speed; and in the mean time we will offer up our requests to him 'who heareth the young ravens when they cry.'"

Martha went; but when she came to the house her heart failed her, and she passed by the door again and again, without going in to tell her errand.

Mr. N., standing at the shop door, called her to him, and asked her if she was not Mr. Heywood's servant. When she told him that she was, he said to her, "I am glad to see you, as some friends here have given me five guineas for your master, and I was just thinking how I might send it."

Upon this she burst into tears and told him her errand. He was much affected with the story, and told her to come to him if the like necessity should return.

Having procured the necessary provisions, she hastened back with them, when, upon entering the house, the children eagerly examined the basket, and further, hearing the servant's narrative, smiled, and said, "The Lord hath not forgotten to be gracious: his word is true from the beginning; they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing."

When the spirit of persecution was so hot against this good man that he was obliged to leave his family, he set off one winter's morning, before it was light, like Abraham, not knowing whither he went, and without a farthing in his pocket. Having committed himself to the care of Divine providence, he determined at length to leave his horse to go whither he would.