

Clad in purple—and elated,
O'er their fellows elevated,
They shall be by death unsated.

O how cheating, O how fleeting
All—yes! all that's earthly!
Every thing is fading—flying—
Man is mortal—earth is dying—
Christian! live on Heaven relying.

The same writer truly pictures our fearful estate, if we heed not the silent progress of "the enemy," that by proper attention we may convert into a friend:—

TIME.

On! on! our moments hurry by
Like shadows of a passing cloud,
Till general darkness wrap the sky,
And man sleeps senseless in his shroud.

He sports, he trifles time away,
Till time is his to waste no more:
Heedless he hears the surges play—
And then is dash'd upon the shore.

He has no thought of coming days,
Though they alone deserve his thought;
And so the heedless wanderer strays,
And treasures nought and gathers nought.

Though wisdom speak—his ear is dull;
Though virtue smile—he sees her not;
His cup of vanity is full;
And all besides forgone—forgot.

PIOUS LIBERTIES.*

CHAP. II.

It may be asked, why expose the infirmities of the human mind? Why display so many instances of raving superstition and ignorance? To this we answer, that we wish them to be laughed down; for the authors of such farrago do much dis-service to religion, not among those who know how to discriminate, but among those who do not. If these rhapsodies had been acted *only* among the covenanters of Scotland, then it would not be worth while to drag forth the unwelcome records from their by-gone obscurity; but the same cant is every now and then attempted to be obtruded among us, by the fanatics of the present day, who even go to the length of saying that they are sensible of the operations of the Holy Spirit, and even name time and place. Now we think this is going too far—so far, indeed, as to deserve our ridicule! for reasoning with such inspirati, or illuminati, the favoured people, is altogether out of the question. In fact, fanatics never were any great friends to reason and learning, and not without some kind of plea; first, because they have usually a slender provision of either; secondly, because a man has no occasion to spend his time and his pains in the studious way, who has an inward illumination to guide him to truth, and to make such labour unnecessary. Will it be pretended that certain pastors of the flock do not encourage all this? Read sectarian pamphlets and periodicals of the present period.

Never was hypocrisy carried to a greater height than in the civil wars of Charles I. They had Triers who appointed preachers to their livings, first asking them such questions as these:—When were you converted? Where did you begin to feel the motions of the Spirit? In what year? In what month? In what day? About what hour of the day had you the secret call or motion of the spirit, to undertake and labour in the ministry? What work of grace has God wrought upon your soul? and a great many other questions about regeneration, predestination, and the like.

*Vide No. 6, page 47.

Mechanics of all sorts were then preachers, and some of them were much admired and followed by the mob. "I am to tell thee, Christian reader, (says Dr. Featley—preface to his *Dipper Dipped*, 1647) this new year, of new changes, never heard of in former ages, namely, of stables turned into temples, and I will beg leave to add, temples turned into stables, stalls into quires, shopboards into communion tables, tubs into pulpits, aprons into linen ephods, and mechanics of the lowest ranks into priests of the highest places. I wonder that our door-posts and walls sweat not, upon which such notes as these have been lately affixed: 'on such a day such a brewer's clerk exerciseth, such a tailor expoundeth, such a waterman teacheth.' If cooks, instead of mincing their meat, fall upon dividing of the word—if tailors leap up from the shopboard into the pulpit, and patch up sermons out of stolen shreds—if not only of the lowest of the people, as in Jeroboam's time, priests are consecrated to the Most High God—do we marvel to see such confusion in the church as there is?" Here are felt-makers, who can roundly deal with the blockheads and neutral demicasters of the world—cobblers, who can give good rules for upright walking, and handle scripture to a bristle—coachmen, who know how to lash the beastly enormities, and curb the headstrong insolence of this brutish age, stoutly exhorting to stand up for the truth, lest the wheel of destruction roundly overrun us. We have weavers that can sweetly inform us of the shuttle swiftness of the times, and practically thread out the vicissitudes of all sublunary things till the web of our life be cut off; and here are mechanics of any profession, who can separate the pieces of salvation from those of damnation—measure out every man's portion, and cut it out by thread—substantially pressing the points, till they have fashionably filled up their work with a well-buttoned conclusion."

But to proceed:—The Puritans in the days of Charles I. were so daring as to make saucy expostulations with God from the pulpit. Mr. Vines, in St. Clement's-church, near Templebar, used the following words: 'O Lord, thou hast never given us a victory this long while, for all our frequent fasting. What dost thou mean, O Lord, to fling us in a ditch and there leave us?' And one Robinson, in his prayer at Southampton, August 25, 1642, expressed himself in the following manner: 'O God, O God, many are the hands that are lifted up against us; but there is one God, it is thou thyself, O Father, who doest us more mischief than they all.' They seemed to encourage this sauciness in their public sermons: 'Gather upon God, (says Mr. R. Harris, Fast Sermon before the Commons,) and hold him to it, as Jacob did—press him with his precepts, with his promises, with his hand, with his seal, with his oath, till we do *disopein*, as some Greek fathers boldly speak: that is, if I may speak it reverently enough, put the Lord out of countenance—put him, as you would say, to the blush, unless we be masters of our requests.'

Evans goes still farther: 'O God, O God, many are the hands lifted up against us, but there is one, God, it is thou thyself, O Father, who doest us more mischief than they all, (this was a favourite phrase.) O Lord, when wilt thou take a chair and sit among the house of Peers? And when, O God, when, I say, wilt thou vote among the honourable house of Commons? We know, O Lord, that Abraham made a covenant, and Moses and David made a covenant, and our Saviour made a covenant—but thy Parliament's covenant is the greatest of all covenants. I say this is God's cause, and if our God has any cause, this is it; and if this be not God's cause, then God is no God for us, but the devil has got up into heaven.'

It is curious to observe, that those who took those pious liberties, took the liberty also of quarrelling with the most innocent customs then in use, as the eating of Christmas pies and plum-porridge at Christmas, which they reputed as very sinful. This might be further illustrated if we had