

FEAR AND LOVE.

BY THE REV. FORSTER CROZIER.



HAT the region of love is the "higher life" is unquestionable, and difference of opinion can only exist as to its attainability by any or all of us. In serving God we may be actuated by fear, but this we know is utterly insufficient to make a heart tender and a nature perfectly obedient. A child may be taught to fear its parent, but the probable result will be that it will scarcely be able to do right, in its horror and tremour lest it should do wrong; and at all events, if the child can do wrong, and keep its parent ignorant of the fact, it will not shrink much from doing so. Let the child, however, be taught to love its parent, and that love will make it the child's delight to do the parent's pleasure. It is just so in the relation of our life to God. We must love Him if we must obey Him, and the measure of our love will be the measure of our obedience.

Further, this fear may not only have reference to God, but may result from our convictions regarding another life. We may think of death, judgment, and eternity, and may feel how deeply solemn a thing life is, and how necessary to prepare for all those scenes in which we must each bear an important part; but the result will be, if our life be governed only by a reference to these truths, we shall just strive to do as much as we think necessary to gain eternal life, and we shall leave undone what may be regarded as *superfluous*. How different is it with the principle of love! Its language to God is,—“Too much for thee I cannot do, too much to Thee I cannot give.” He who is under its constraining influence, enters the house of God, not driven by fear of death or dread of judgment, but because he loves to meet with God and delights in His worship. He gives to the cause of God, not to satisfy his conscience, but to maintain and extend the “kingdom” of his Father and Friend. And it is just so in reference to all other duties which relate to God; only love can perfect them. It is precisely the same in reference to our duties one to another. Let our life be governed by love, and though it does not follow that we shall admit every other person to our confidence and companionship, it does follow that all uncharitableness, and envy, and malice cease to have a place in our heart, and that our conduct be right toward men, even should theirs be wrong toward us. This is the perfect life, and there is no other, the life of love.

And then not only is there the moral strength to stand fast amid temptations and trial, but there is the moral and spiritual power to do good. Look at this power as it exhibits itself in a public teacher. What a power for good even a weak man has who is under the prevailing influence of love! And as it is in him, so it is with a private Christian. Nay, whether we be actively engaged in doing good or not, if we be under the operation of this principle, our life must be powerful. Sometimes we meet a friend in company, and though the conversation is not strictly spiritual, yet there is something in our friend's spirit and conversation that charms us. There is an unaffectedness, a simplicity, and a breadth of charity which we delight to see. In order to exercising a right influence in all companies and on all occasions, but especially in order to our fitness and usefulness as active agents of God, let us leave “the principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on unto perfection.”