

THE VALUE OF THE BIBLE.

BY H. E. CLARKE, ESQ.

If we were to judge by appearances we would often put it down as of no particular value to certain of its possessors. It lies unused on the parlour table, or it has a conspicuous and an undisturbed place in the family library. But it is a mistake to suppose that the value of an article is measured by the care we bestow upon it, or by the joy with which we treasure it. Long possession, with immunity from accident or risk of loss, brings with it a carelessness of holding which is too frequently mistaken for indifference. If we would know the value of what is held with such seeming indifference an attempt must be made to deprive us of it; then it is that we understand "how blessings brighten as they take their flight."

Life itself is not properly valued until it becomes endangered. Men make light of the first attacks of disease, but let it continue to creep stealthily through the system until it is felt to be nearing some vital part, and soon that health which was lightly held becomes of inestimable value. "Yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life."

So it is with our Bible. If we want to know how much it is valued, even where it is but little used, we must try to imagine what the world would be without it. And to do this we must take man, not when in fancied security he is sporting on the banks of life's river enjoying the rich scenes that are spread out before him, but when the storms of life are lifting the tide until it threatens to cover the banks and sweep everything into the blackness of an eternal destruction. Then it is that men in their helplessness look round for some encouragement or support; and where are they to look when the Bible is gone? Nature has no comfort or upport to offer. No answer comes

from the heavens above or the earth beneath. Nature follows a man to the grave, and as it leaves him there, the old, old cry seems to be forced from the very depths of every yearning heart, "If a man die, shall he live again?" And all humanity listens for the answer, but listens in vain, for the grave has no answer to give. It can only say, "Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"

What a strange substitute this would be for the assurances of the Christian's Bible. Who would consent to part with a book that has power to throw a clear light beyond the grave, and accept the chilling philosophy that would blot the future out of existence, and leave humanity but the few short years of a troubled life, and then the utter blankness and darkness of nonentity?

Let us, however, enter some of the abodes of men, and test the real value of the Bible by an attempt to take it away and substitute some of the newer philosophies. Here is a home where the ripple of laughter flows from room to room from morning until night, as its members feel the glow of health tingling through their veins. But the time comes, as sooner or later the time must come with all, when the hand of disease is allowed to lay its wasting finger on some member of that joyous household. Then what a change takes place. The buoyant step becomes heavy with anxiety. The voice of joy is hushed, and the whole household is stricken to the heart, for they know that the shadow of a coming event has reached out towards them, and that soon it will fill their hearts with gloom. How quietly now do the inmates move about, listening with hushed breath to the sounds that fall on their quickening senses from the room