

exercised, through the knowledge of the fact that no indulgence in excesses of any kind can take place, without being followed immediately by consequences of a penal nature, can scarcely be over-estimated. It is customary, however, at the present day, to impute, to the divine dispensation, all bodily infirmities and domestic afflictions, without regard to the separate application which distinguishes the natural dispensation from the christian. In the prospect of a future state of happiness or misery, the public mind is, thus, made to lose sight of the measure of good or evil which every individual, by his particular conduct, causes to himself, in this world. The two dispensations are so blended, by official authority both secular and religious, that the distinction between them, if not completely obliterated, is, at least, scarcely discernible. Indeed, I know of no cause more calculated to produce individual omissions of personal and domestic duty, than the belief that the penalty is distant and uncertain. But no two things can be more distinct, in their consequences, than the natural and christian dispensations; for while the one relates exclusively to material concerns, to good and bad works; the other refers to a spiritual life alone, to the faith and disbelief from which good and bad works emanate. It is therefore palpable, that whatever has a material design is, necessarily, in its consequences material; and, accordingly, that, under the natural dispensation, misdeeds of omission or commission, carry with them, an immediate corresponding punishment in this life. For daily acts, punishment in a future state seems too remote; and is, therefore, inoperative on the fears and consciences of most people. Repentance, though late, gives hope; and procrastinates the resolution to reform. That faith or disbelief which shapes a man's general conduct, and is the primary source of his good or bad acts, is undoubtedly what merits an award in a future life; and this is the true interpretation of the scriptural doctrine. But the moral tendency of individual acts, is dependent on their being followed, by immediate corresponding consequences; and accordingly, if we interpret the natural revelation aright, we shall find that there are few examples, in which the happiness and misery we experience, are not of our own creation. In illustrating this, it is not necessary to go beyond the limits of hygiene and medicine. The consequences of crimes and offences against persons and property are, however, no exceptions to the general rule. But as our subject, properly comprises, only the conditions of body consequent on the knowledge or ignorance of its hygienic and medicinal requirements, it would be irrelevant to introduce what does not come under this head.