

dorn, how affectingly are we taught that death will close the most brilliant course, and that even royalty is not exempt from that law which lays the King as well as the peasant in the dust! Though we had all wealth, therefore, though we had all honour; the riches of a Croesus and the honours of an Eastern potentate, death would come in to rob us of them, or separate us from them.

But in themselves they are unsatisfactory. "Man walketh," says the Psalmist, "in a vain show." The greatest pageant of this world is but a pageant after all. It is more dazzling to the spectator than to the principal party engaged in it. No amount of earthly splendour can of itself confer true happiness. Happiness is a thing of the mind. Earthly greatness often brings care and vexation along with it. Solomon declared all to be vanity and vexation of spirit. No riches, no honours, will keep away the troubles of life; and they can afford no comfort under them. The very contrast between the outward circumstances, which one would think would minister to happiness, if any thing would, and the real internal disquietude or sorrow, but deepens the gloom of the latter, as the shade of a picture is increased by the brilliancy of the light which also strikes upon it. The King of Israel would know the effect of this contrast, and he could pronounce all the royal pomp and splendour but a vain shew, on which others gazed with admiration and envy. It was after surveying the best estate of man, probably including his own prosperity and greatness, but looking at them not with the eye of vulgar admiration, but with the sober eye of enlightened reason, and religion, that turning from these to the object of his fondest trust and confidence, he could say: "And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee."

Hope is a principle of the mind which it will in no circumstances, almost, let go.

It is a principle which has exercise in a state of imperfect enjoyment. It is properly a world like this which sin has abridged of its happiness, but which full and condign punishment has not overtaken, but where mercy has hung out the banner of invitation and of love, that is the scene of hope. It is under a mingled dispensation of judgment and of mercy that there is room for hope. There is but imperfect enjoyment; but all enjoyment is not taken away; and what we

have not we may hope to possess. We look forward to the future for many things which we have not in the present. And thus is the mind continually exercised. It is still stretching forward into the future. Is our lot good? we have not all that we hope to enjoy. Is it bad? we look for better days. We struggle against despair. In spite of itself, the mind looks for better things to come than any it has yet possessed. It snatches happiness from the future. It pierces the dark and settling clouds which hide the light of a more promising sky. The mind would be miserable without hope. Just because all happiness is imperfect, and the future must be put under contribution for what the present does not yield. The present is not felt to be enough, full as it may be of blessings—Still more is asked for. It is chiefly, however, in the midst of adverse circumstances, that the mind indulges this principle. But what state is there that does not need, and in which the mind does not indulge, it? And as numerous as are the desires and wants of the mind, are the quarters from which hope draws its pictures of happiness. The world is the great field over which hope ranges; it furnishes the objects for which the mind pants, and which hope seizes with eager grasp. What multitudes are busily engaged in sketching out the future, and still their hopes terminate with the world! the riches, the pleasures, the honours of the world! Hardly a thought is directed beyond this scene. This is our natural tendency. How different from this is the feeling or experience of the psalmist: "Now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee." He had withdrawn his hopes from this world, or his hopes had now a higher object and a wider range than this visible horizon, and this terrestrial scene. It took a better, a nobler, direction. It had God himself, or his promises, as its object, and sphere of action—It was called off merely earthly and temporal objects, and fixed on eternal objects. No one can read those spiritual compositions which were the production of David's pen, without perceiving that his hope had an entirely different aim and direction from that of the generality of those around him. They were seeking earthly good, earthly pleasure, but his hope was in the Lord his God. While the hope of others took the direction of time and of the world, his was fixed on God. It rose above this sublunary scene, and travelled amid the immensity of eternal joys.