

alone with that soul which they are thus bereaving of life. Sometimes it would seem that men must go on to the most shameful excess of sin, before they can come to know that it is sin. Sometimes by means of outward misery and disgrace, the iron must enter into their very soul, before they come to know that the service of sin is *slavery*. Sometimes it is not until they have sought their help and consolation in the world, by a course of the profoundest and most humiliating devotion to it, that they find out its emptiness, and their own misery in having nothing better to trust in. It is often long, very long, before men come to themselves.

O reader,—you who are going on in such a course of self-forgetfulness,—you, who give yourself no time to commune with your own heart—what madness is this? Are you to find happiness by forgetting what you really are, and ought to be?—Is your soul to be satisfied while all its true necessities are cruelly neglected?—Are you to find peace amid all that noise and turmoil wherewith you drown the voice of conscience? It is mere infatuation. O come back to yourself. Seek some quiet place where you can commune with your own heart, where you can hear the inward voice which tells you that you are a son, though an apostate son, and that your true place is in the Father's house, which you have so long forsaken and forgotten. When you once discover that the cause of all the want and misery you have begun to feel lies in this, that you are a *lost* son of God, then your next word may be, "I will arise and go to my Father," as it was with this son in the parable. We now trace

THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE.

When he 'came to himself,' when the long dormant consciousness of sonship awoke within him, and when he realized his misery

and degradation, these were, in his own mind, straightway connected with his sin. The last word of his self-communing might be paraphrased thus—"I, the son of such a father, *perish* with hunger; I *perish here*, far from him, among strangers; I *perish here* by my own fault in that I chose to leave that home." His heart was now busy with his sin of apostacy, in which he now discovered the true source of all his wretchedness. His resort to earnest reflection had thus been productive of two results—first, The knowledge of himself in the simple truth of his condition and relations; and second, The knowledge, or sense, of his misery and degradation, and of these as the consequences of his sin. And now immediately it begins to bear fruit in outward action—he comes to the *point of resolution*.

Let us try to imagine the scene as depicted here at this point of the history. This son has now come to the extremity of want. Sent into the fields to feed swine, he is left there in neglect to perish with hunger. He is but a young man yet, and, amid all his rags and wretchedness, there is about him a nameless air of nobility which speaks him fit for better things than these. Want and famine have paled his countenance, and emaciated his frame, and he sits down wearily, with drooping head, and downcast eye. The solitude and silence are propitious to thought, and busy memory begins to lead him back through all the windings of his past life. He thinks on his past ways. He tries his past life. As sins and follies pass before him in review, a deep-felt sense of shame overwhelms him: lower, and yet lower droops his head, in utter dejection and despondency. But, suddenly his head is lifted erect, his eye is lighted up with something like a hope; some murmured words fall from his lips, among which you hear, "I will arise." A ray of light and hope has reached his