

MISQUOTED TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE. No. II.

"The sin which doth so easily beset us."—Heb. xii. 1.

BY THE EDITOR.

By a very free and easy method of accommodation, not uncommon among preachers of the Gospel, this text has been made to do duty on all sorts of occasions, and in a great variety of ways. At least one eloquent divine has employed it against the vice of gambling—a sin which does undoubtedly "easily beset" the man who indulges it, though not the sin to which the Apostle refers. With equal appropriateness might it be directed against intemperance, profanity, or lust, of all of which the same general statement is true, for all these forms of vice easily run into habits which are very difficult to cure.

But the writer of this Epistle has in view some particular sin, to which these Hebrew Christians were specially liable, and against which he warns them. What is it? Undoubtedly the sin of *unbelief*, and neglect of the great salvation in consequence of it. The entire Epistle is a caveat against apostasy, while every now and then it becomes impassioned and sublime, as e.g. in chapters ii. 3; iii. 12-15; x. 23-29; xii. 15-25. To apply it, therefore, to any "besetting" sin, as is frequently done, is to throw away all the force of the Apostle's argument and illustrations, which are in point in regard to the sin of unbelief, and in regard to no other. Make him to speak of intemperance, profanity, or any other evil, and there is at once no sequence between his reasoning and his conclusion. Understand him to refer to unbelief as the easily besetting sin of those whom he addresses, and all is logical and clear and cogent.

But is it not a striking fact that a whole Epistle, and that, too, one of the longest in the New Testament, has been devoted to warning us against this one sin? How great must be the evil and the danger, to us, of a sin so singled out! No other sin is made the subject of any entire book in the Bible, as this is. Yet how "easily" we fall into it, and how light we often make of it! We shrink back horrified from the thought of adultery, or blasphemy, or drunkenness, while unbelief is regarded as comparatively trifling and excusable. Yet this same unbelief, so palliated and condoned by us, is the rejection of God's dear Son, and the effectual frustration of His purpose of love and mercy toward us in His sufferings and death. It is "making God a liar." It is "resisting the Holy Ghost," and "trampling under foot the blood of the Covenant," and shutting for ever against ourselves the door of hope. It is for this that men are condemned already—"because they have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." And well, therefore, might such bad pre-eminence be given to it, in the consecration of a whole Epistle to it, with a view to exhibiting its evils, and our liability to fall into it. Let it not have been written in vain, in respect of any of us!

 THE ENGLISH CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS.

The address of the Rev. T. W. Aveling, Chairman of the English Congregational Union, at their May meeting, dealt with a great variety of topics connected with religious and church-life. We give a few extracts. Starting out with the inquiry—"What can be done to give more effect to the arrangements that are made here for the good of those under our care, and for the honour of the Chief Shepherd?" he first sounds a note of warning to his brethren in the ministry: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood; therefore watch." In order to which, he says, "we must be *leaders in spiritual things*; must be 'ensamples to the flock, in all holy conversation and godliness.' 'TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES.' Ah, 'there's the rub!' Never