

that the chief things of the soul have been overlooked, and that the virtues they have done are far less than those they have left undone; and the plausible outside only makes more intolerable the real emptiness within.

There is another way in which conscience delivers its pointed testimony in this matter; it causes a man to be more and more sensitive to this guilt in proportion as he advances in Christian attainment. As he rises higher in holiness, his notions of what holiness is enlarge and expand, and he becomes more and more scrupulous. Failings and neglects to which he might have once been blind are now visible blots on his white robes, and he cannot endure them. Opportunities of usefulness, which it once would not have occurred to him to improve, are now seen by him as imperative in their call upon his fidelity; and a failure, that once would have been forgotten in an hour, now haunts him with an abiding anguish. A small omission burdens him like a crime.

I suppose, however, that few can honestly inspect themselves without finding this to be one of their easily besetting sins. Through sloth, or indolence, or procrastination, — because one loves his ease too well to move at all, or would rather move by and by, or does not think about it in any way, — he omits again and again what he ought to do. And what follows? Consequences that often shame himself, and greatly injure others; and beyond these, consequences which he cannot reckon, and would not dare to guess, and which eternity alone will disclose to him. The thought should startle him. Let it mix itself with the retrospections and resolutions of this solemn hour, and give vigor to the new purposes of the new year. It is not impossible that he may find some aid, in giving