

beast; but he prays that men indulging in sin, and living only for a present world, might be made to see, that they are acting the part of brute beasts, and reducing themselves to their level. And then he goes on to illustrate his meaning in the 19th verse: "For that," says he, "which befalleth the sons of men, considered us animals, befalleth beasts: even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath: so that a man, with reference to his animal nature only, hath no preminence above a beast: for all the pursuits of the natural man, living for a present world only, are vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." And then in the 21st verse he explains the true state of the matter, pointing out the grand distinction between the man and the beast, lamenting that so few consider it. "Who knoweth," says he, "the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" As if he had said, how few are there who show by their lives, that they know and consider the grand distinction between the man and the beast, which consists in this,—that the spirit of man goeth upward to appear before God's judgment-seat, while the Spirit of the beast goeth downward to the earth. And then, in the 22nd verse, he states the conclusion at which he has arrived, as to the manner in which men should act with regard to the fruits of their own labor. "Wherefore" says he, I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in the fruit of his own works." This just means, that he had arrived at the conclusion, with regard to a man's conduct in this world, that he ought to take the comfortable use of the fruits of his honest industry, receiving nothing but what he could possess with a good conscience, and retaining nothing but what would afford him enjoy-

ment, and not uselessly heaping up wealth for those who are to come after him. For this he assigns two reasons. First, because this is the portion assigned him by God in the world, and he should enjoy it, and be thankful for it. Secondly, he should enjoy and dispose of it himself; for he knows not who may come into possession of it after him, or what use the future possessor may make of it.

It must be admitted that this is a somewhat difficult passage, but, far from countenancing the gloomy doctrine of the materialist, it brings prominently forward the spiritual nature of man, and states that the grand distinction between the man and the beast is this, that while the spirit of the beast goeth downward to the earth, the spirit of man goeth upward to heaven. That this is the meaning of the passage is evident, from the parallel passage in the 12th chapter of this same book, where, at the 7th verse, the Preacher saith, "Then shall the dust return to the earth, as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."—It will be universally agreed that an author best understands his own meaning; and consequently, when an obscure or dubious statement occurs in one place, it ought to be interpreted, according to the known opinion of the author, as more clearly developed in some other portion of his writings.

The spirit of this somewhat difficult passage is faithfully and beautifully expressed in the following paraphrase quoted from an anonymous author, in Dr. Clark's Commentary:

"Man was born
To die, nor aught exceeds in this respect
The vilest brute. Both transient, frail and vain,
Draw the same breath; alike grow old, decay,
And then expire: both to one grave descend;
There blended lie, to native dust returned.
The nobler part of man, 'tis true, survives
The frail corporeal frame: but who regards
The difference? Those who live like beasts, as
such