

like these, could reasonably have been expected. If we are urgent with our readers and friends to continue and increase their efforts in our favour, it is because we wish not only to place our little work completely out of danger, but also to render its proceeds tributary to the schemes of Christian benevolence which are now in operation.

#### SHUN VAIN COMPANY.

By vain company I do not mean merely the society of the openly vicious, and the avowedly profane and profligate. Every man who knows any thing at all of the grace of Christ, or has sincerely yielded himself to God, will just as naturally and instinctively recoil from the presence of such men, as he would from the sight of a rabid animal, or from the approach of a serpent. A man of loyalty would just as soon court the fellowship of traitors; a man of genuine unbending integrity would just as soon take to his confidence and kindness the convicted cheat, or the known seducer, as a man of firm and faithful attachment to the King of Heaven, would maintain chosen intercourse with the impious and abandoned, the revilers of his Saviour, and the enemies of his God.

The designation, *vain company*, has a far more extensive application. It comprehends the society of all who are unprofitable, as well as pernicious. And many companions are inexpressibly dangerous, who have nothing in their appearance to create alarm or excite suspicion. This is pre-eminently the case with those, who, along with a plausible and prepossessing exterior, retain a rooted attachment to the world; and while they attend the ordinances of religion, and ape the language and manners of the faithful, are strangers to the commanding and soul-subduing influence of vital godliness.

The duties of life and the intercourse of society, may frequently

bring you into contact with persons of this description: and when you meet with them, Christianity not only permits, but requires you to treat them with courtesy and with kindness. But it is unchristian and dangerous to select them for your associates; to throw yourselves unnecessarily in their way; or to spend more time in their presence than what the calls of business, the claims of friendship, or the conscientious hope of promoting their eternal welfare imperiously demand. Whilst the faintest hope remains, that your example, your counsels, or your conversation will reach their heart, and rouse them to a just and an earnest concern for their everlasting felicity, you are not only justified but obliged to persevere in your benevolent efforts to conciliate their attention and regard, and render their affection for you subservient to their spiritual and eternal advantage.

But whenever this prospect closes, your duty is to withdraw from their presence. No rational end can then be proposed for frequenting their company. Though your conversation cannot profit them, their secular spirit and wordly discourse may soon, though insensibly, inflict a deep and lasting injury upon the spirituality of your mind, and the purity and fervour of your devotion. Without increasing the heat of a December-night, a ball, red hot from the furnace, will soon contract the temper of the surrounding atmosphere. Without mitigating the sufferings of the victims of contagion in a hospital, before they are aware, the most sound and robust will soon lose their own health amidst the infected exhalations which the tainted are respiring. And without being able to infuse into the worldly and the carnal, the slightest portion of the piety, the warmth, and the zeal which you feel, by needlessly mingling in their society, you yourselves may soon decline in the life and power of religion, and imbibe