

But not content with waging warfare against actual sin, I have often taken an arrow from my quiver to urge it home against bad habits, churchish dispositions, and thoughtless behaviour; in doing this, I may, at times have been a little severe, but we have all something to forgive, and you must forgive me.

With shame, also, I acknowledge a disposition to prate about myself, which I fear is too common among old folks. I have said more of myself than I ought to have said, and thought more highly of myself than I ought to think. This is pitiful pride in an old man who ought to know, and, indeed, does know, the worthlessness of all his productions, and that in his best estate he is altogether vain.

There is yet another failing that all must have observed in me, a bad habit of passing too suddenly from the grave to the gay, from the lively to the severe. The natural buoyancy of my thoughts renders me continually liable to this infirmity: let my friends lay hold on what is solid in my remarks, and forgive any thing like levity.

These are failings in Old Humphrey, but the worst of all his faults is yet to be named, and that is that he has not, in a straightforward, right-on course, more constantly dwelt on spiritual subjects: he has beat about the bush, too often contenting himself with an occasional allusion to godliness. Few and far between have been his earnest appeals to your consciences in spiritual affairs: he has followed the will-o'-the-wisps of his own imagination; and has been too much like the thermometer, that accommodates itself to the temperature of the atmosphere that surrounds it. Oh for a godly sincerity, an uncompromising integrity in all things!

Now I am about to take my leave, a sense of my deficiencies oppresses me. I could blush to think of the little that I have done, where I ought to have done much: of the lightness of my language, where it ought to have been weighty! I feel at this moment that an old man has no business to amuse himself in blowing bubbles and balancing straws, when all the best energies of his heart and soul are not enough to enable him to discharge his duty. Pass by, then, all that you have found in me undeserving of regard, my censurable pride, and my foolish levity: and if my pen has ever been that of a ready writer in divine things, if ever a single sentence has escaped me, adapted to make you wiser and better, let it not be forgotten.

In the midst of all my errors and light-heartedness, I have that abiding conviction of the goodness of God, and that love for the Redeemer in my heart, which I would not be deprived of for all that this world has to bestow. Come, then, let us strive together, running the race that is set before us with increased alacrity, in the service of our common Master. Let us cling more closely to the cross of Christ, and seek more earnestly for the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, that, purged from worldly dross, we may be made meet to be partakers of the glorious inheritance prepared for God's people, through Him who has loved us, and given himself for us, that we might live for ever. "Finally, brethren, farewell! be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

### The Responsibilities of Booksellers.

It is a very common thing to hear of the evils of pernicious reading, of how it invades the mind, or how it depraves the principles. The complaints are doubtless just. These books could not be read, and these evils would be spared the world, if one did not write, and another did not print, and another did not sell, and another did not circulate them. Are those then, without whose agency the mischief could not ensue, to be held innocent in affording this agency? Yet, kindly as we complain of the evil, and can fully as we warn our children to avoid it, how seldom do we hear public reprobation of the writers! As to printers, and booksellers, and library keepers, we scarcely hear their offences mentioned at all. We speak not of those abandoned publications which all respectable men condemn, but of those which, pernicious as they are confessed to be, furnish reading-rooms and libraries, and are habitually sold in almost every bookseller's shop. Seneca says, "He that lends a man money to carry him to a bawdy-house, or a weapon for his revenge, makes himself a partner of his crime." He, too, who writes or sells a book which will, in all probability, injure the reader, is accessory to the mischief which may be done; with this aggravation, when compared with the examples of Seneca, that whilst the money would probably do mischief to but one or two persons, the book may injure a hundred or a thousand. Of the writers of injurious

books, we need say no more. If the inferior agents are censured, the primary agent must be more censurable. A printer or a bookseller should, however, reflect, that to be not so bad as another, is a different thing from being innocent. When we see that the owner of a press will print any work that is offered to him, with no other concern about its tendency than whether it will subject him to penalties from the law, we surely must perceive that he exercises but a very imperfect virtue. Is it obligatory upon us not to promote ill principles in other men? He does not fulfil the obligation. Is it obligatory upon us to promote rectitude by unpeachable example? He does not exhibit that example. If we were right for my neighbor to furnish me with the means of moral injury, it would not be wrong for me to accept and to employ them.

I stand in a bookseller's shop, and observe his customers successively coming in. One orders a lexicon, and one a work of scurrilous infidelity; one Captain Cook's Voyages, and one a new licentious romance. If the bookseller takes and executes all these orders with the same willingness, I cannot but perceive that there is an inconsistency, an incompleteness, in his moral principles of action. Perhaps this person is so conscious of the mischievous effects of such books, that he would not allow them in the hands of his children, or suffer them to be seen on his parlor table. But if he thus knows the evils which they inflict, can it be right for him to be the agent in diffusing them? Such a person does not exhibit that consistency, that completeness of virtuous conduct, without which the Christian character cannot be fully exhibited. Step into the shop of this bookseller's neighbor, a druggist, and there, if a person asks for some arsenic, the tradesman begins to be anxious. He considers whether it is probable the buyer wants it for a proper purpose. If he does sell it, he cautions the buyer to keep it where others cannot have access to it; and, before he delivers the packet, legibly inscribes upon it Poison. One of these men sells poison to the body, and the other to the mind. If the anxiety and caution of the druggist is right, the indifference of the bookseller must be wrong. Add to which, that the druggist would not sell arsenic at all if it were not sometimes useful; but to what readers can a vicious book be useful?

Suppose for a moment that no printer would commit such a book to his press, and that no bookseller would sell it, the consequence would be, that nine-tenths of these manuscripts would be thrown into the fire, or rather, that they would never have been written. The inference is obvious; and surely it is not needful again to enforce the consideration, that although your refusal might prevent vicious books from being published, you are not therefore exempt from the obligation to refuse. A man must do his duty whether the effects of his fidelity be such as he would desire or not. Such purity of conduct might, no doubt, circumscribe a man's business, and so does purity of conduct in some other professions; but if this be a sufficient excuse for contributing to demoralize the world, if profit be a justification of a departure from rectitude, it will be easy to defend the business of a pickpocket.

I know that the principles of conduct which these paragraphs recommend, lead to grave practical consequences: I know that they lead to the conclusion that the business of a printer or a bookseller, as it is ordinarily conducted, is not consistent with Christian uprightness. A man may carry on a business in select works; and this, by some conscientious persons, is really done. In the present state of the press, the difficulty of obtaining a considerable business as a bookseller without circulating injurious works may frequently be great, and it is in consequence of this difficulty that we see so few booksellers amongst the Quakers. The few who do conduct the business generally reside in large towns, where the demand for all books is so great that a person can procure a competent income though he excludes the bad.

He who is more studious to justify his conduct than to act aright may say, that if a person may sell no book that can injure another, he can scarcely sell any book. The answer is, that although there must be some difficulty in discrimination, though a bookseller cannot always inform himself what the precise tendency of a book is—yet there can be no difficulty in judging respecting numberless books, that their tendency is bad. If we cannot define the precise distinction between the good and the evil, we can, nevertheless, perceive the evil when it has attained to a certain extent. He who cannot distinguish day from evening can distinguish it from night.

The case of the proprietors of common circulating libraries is yet more palpable: because the majority of the books which they contain inflict injury upon their readers. How it happens that persons of respectable character, and who join with others in la-