

shame. Encumbered with a load of guilt, voluntarily incurred, we may "strive to enter," according to the expression of our LORD, "the strait gate of life : but shall find, to our confusion, that we are finally, and for ever, excluded.

The nature of a solemn fast, then, appears to be the humbling of ourselves in the presence of our Creator, attended with the confession of our sins, an earnest solicitation of pardon, and a faithful and steady determination to amend our lives. As an individual learns, in the hard school of affliction, to reflect on those blemishes in his character, which the dazzling sunshine of prosperity had wholly prevented him from discerning : so societies and nations, who, blessed with a long train of fortunate events, are almost ready to forget GOD, when calamity overtakes, or appears to menace them, call to mind, with profound regret, their national iniquities ; and the nation,