



£15

[Juvenile]

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Fig. 18.

Illustration of the Snake and the Man.

ADVICE TO YOUTH;
CONTAINING
A COMPENDIUM
OF THE
DUTIES OF HUMAN LIFE
IN
YOUTH AND MANHOOD.

BY

HUGH BLAIR, D. D. F. R. S.

Author of Sermons, Lectures on Rhetoric, &c.

THIRD EDITION,
Enlarged, and Improved,
WITH A COROLLARY TO EACH CHAPTER;
To which is prefixed
A SHORT SKETCH OF
THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR, &c. &c.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

In offering the following pages to the public there needs no apology; for while the cultivation of the youthful mind is considered an important duty, any thing, however trifling, from the pen of DR. BLAIR on the subject must be received not only with candour, but meet with that patronage which his distinguished works have never failed to experience.

This little volume has been selected from his writings with a view to give a more extensive circulation to those pious admonitions and unsophisticated moral maxims which he has delivered for the government of life, calculated as well to form the youthful mind to virtue, as to give grace and dignity to manhood.

Such being the design of the editor in forming this selection, he leaves it to a discerning world to judge

judge of its utility; and to give it that publicity which alone can insure its salutary effect in sowing the seeds of moral excellence in the minds of the rising generation.

The every great circulation of the former editions of this little abstract from the writings of so celebrated an instructor, has suggested the expediency of enlarging it; and to subjoin to each chapter a corollary or inference, to assist the young mind in the judgment it ought to form on each subject. In the present edition the same precise object has been kept in view; and, as an improvement, the volume and page, &c. of the last edition of Dr Blair's Sermons, have been annexed to each head; by which a reference may be had immediately to the volumes at large.

A BRIEF SKETCH
OF THE
FAMILY AND LIFE
OF
DR. HUGH BLAIR,
4c. 4c. 4c.

THIS respectable clergyman of the church of Scotland, was the great grandson of Mr. Robert Blair, one of the chaplains of King Charles the First. Though his ancestors was strongly attached to the presbyterian form of government, he had always the highest opinion of that unfortunate monarch's character.

The Reverend David Blair, the elder of the two sons who survived him, was father of the celebrated author of the poem of *The Grave*. The late solicitor general of Scotland, who eminently distinguished himself at the Scottish bar, was the grandson of David Blair.

Dr. Hugh Blair was of the younger branch, and grandson of Hugh, the younger son of Mr. Robert Blair, who successfully adventured as a merchant in Edinburgh; and his son John, the doctor's father, pursued the same respectable business in the same city.

Academical honours distinguished our author at the University of Edinburgh. He took the degree of A. M. in 1739, though he could not then much exceed the age of 21, being born on the 7th of April, 1718. It was he who first formed the scheme of those tables of chronology, afterwards given to the public in "The Chronology and History of the World," by the Reverend Dr. John Blair, Prebendary of Westminster. On the 21st of October, 1741, he was first licenced as a preacher, and was soon famed for his eloquence; and in a few months was appointed to a parish in Fifeshire, and ordained on the 23d of September, 1742. In ten months he was a successful competitor with one of the most popular clergymen, for filling a vacancy in the suburbs of his native city; where he continued, universally admired, until, in October 1754, he was translated to a church within the city, and in less than four years more to the first ecclesiastical charge in Scotland, the High church of Edinburgh.

Our limits compel us to great brevity in the rest of our narrative. In 1757, the university of St. Andrew's had conferred upon him the honorary degree of D. D.

at

at that time not very common in Scotland. In 1759 he began his Lectures on Composition. In 1762 he was appointed Regius Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Letters in Edinburgh University, with an endowment of £70 a year, created by the King purposely for him. His Dissertation on Ossian's Poems was printed in 1763, which spread his reputation through Europe. It was not till 1777 that his first volume of sermons was published, after much solicitation; these, however, were followed by three other volumes. In July 1780, he had a pension from his Majesty of £200 a year, which he received till his death, in December 1800, after continuing his ministerial labours, in the highest station to which he could be raised, more than forty years. His posthumous volume of sermons had been prepared by him for the press, but a few weeks before his death, and, after he was "laid aside from the labours of the pulpit," on account of the infirmity of his advanced age; the rest of his manuscripts were expressly devoted to destruction.

"It was the fortune of Dr. Blair to appear at a period, when the literature of his country was just beginning to receive
polish,

polish, and an useful direction." What a contrast does this afford to the revolution produced in the English church, during the same period! Extravagance of thought, and absurdity of expression, were no longer countenanced in the church of Scotland, through the steady perseverance of one eminent man; whilst, like an inundating torrent, a melancholy reverse has been effected in England, by the unblushing boldness, or the plausible dexterity, of one or two others, the consequences of which, if not carefully watched, "in season and out of season," we may have to lament, when we are unable to counteract it.

We wish our young friends duly to appreciate the importance of practising the vital duties of religion, both as social and rational beings; but we are equally anxious to caution them against those perversions, which have brought it into discredit. In censuring the abuses, let us warn them not to depreciate the use. This rock is not less dangerous than the other; for both are fatal to the well-being of society.

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ADVICE TO YOUTH.



BOOK I.



CHAP. I.

*The necessity of forming religious principles
at an early age.*

AS soon as you are capable of reflection, you must perceive that there is a right and a wrong in human actions. You see, that those who are born with the same advantages of fortune, are not all equally prosperous in the course of life. While some of them, by wise and

On forming religious Principles early.

steady conduct, attain distinction in the world, and pass their days with comfort and honour; others of the same rank, by mean and vicious behaviour, forfeit the advantages of their birth, involve themselves in much misery, and end in being a disgrace to their friends, and a burthen on society. Early, then, you may learn, that it is not on the external condition in which you find yourselves placed, but on the part which you are to act, that your welfare or unhappiness, your honour or infamy, depend. Now, when beginning to act that part, what can be of greater moment, than to regulate your plan of conduct with the most
serious

On forming religious Principles early.

serious attention, before you have yet committed any fatal or irretrievable errors? If, instead of exerting reflection for this valuable purpose, you deliver yourself up, at so critical a time, to sloth and pleasure; if you refuse to listen to any counsellor but humour, or to attend to any pursuit except that of amusement; if you allow yourselves to float loose and careless on the tide of life, ready to receive any direction which the current of fashion may chance to give you; what can you expect to follow from such beginnings? While so many around you are undergoing the sad consequences of

On forming religious Principles early.

a like indiscretion, for what reason shall not these consequences extend to you? Shall you only attain success without that preparation, and escape dangers without that precaution, which is required of others? Shall happiness grow up to you of its own accord, and solicit your acceptance, when to the rest of mankind, it is the fruit of long cultivation, and the acquisition of labour and care?—Deceive not yourselves with such arrogant hopes. Whatever be your rank, Providence will not, for your sake, reverse its established order. By listening to wise admonitions, and tempering the vivacity of youth with a
proper

On forming religious Principles early.

proper mixture of serious thought, you may insure cheerfulness for the rest of your life ; but, by delivering yourselves up at present to giddiness and levity, you lay the foundation of lasting heaviness of heart.

Vol. I. Sermon XI. page 282—284.

COROLLARY.—We are taught in this chapter, how much it is for the comfort of youth, not to over-rate the pleasures of life, or to hope for those degrees of happiness from them which they are incapable of conferring. There is nothing in which young people so much mistake ; and there is nothing to which they can direct their attention with more and better grounds of contentment and satisfaction in life,

On the Acquisition of virtuous Habits.

than to the regulation of pleasures, to which nothing can so effectually contribute as a just and rational sense of religious principles. /

CHAP. II.

The acquisition of virtuous dispositions and habits a necessary part of education.

WHEN you look forward to those plans of life, which either your circumstances have suggested, or your friends have proposed, you will not hesitate to acknowledge, that in order to pursue them with advantage, some previous discipline is requisite. Be assured, that

On the Acquisition of virtuous Habits.

that whatever is to be your profession, no education is more necessary to your success, than the acquirement of virtuous dispositions and habits. This is the universal preparation for every character, and every station of life. Bad as the world is, respect is always paid to virtue. In the usual course of human affairs it will be found, that a plain understanding, joined with acknowledged worth, contributes more to prosperity, than the brightest parts without probity or honour. Whether science or business, or public life, be your aim, virtue still enters, for a principal share, into all those great departments of society. It is connected with eminence,

On the Acquisition of virtuous Habits.

in every liberal art; with reputation, in every branch of fair and useful business; with distinction, in every public station. The vigour which it gives the mind, and the weight which it adds to character; the generous sentiments which it breathes; the undaunted spirit which it inspires; the ardour of diligence which it quickens; the freedom which it procures from pernicious and dishonourable avocations; are the foundations of all that is high in fame, or great in success, among men. Whatever ornamental or engaging endowments you now possess, virtue is a necessary requisite, in order to their shining with proper lustre. Feeble are the attractions
of

On the Acquisition of virtuous Habits.

of the fairest form, if it be suspected that nothing within corresponds to the pleasing appearance without. Short are the triumphs of wit, when it is supposed to be the vehicle of malice. By whatever arts you may at first attract the attention, you can hold the esteem, and secure the hearts of others, only by amiable dispositions, and the accomplishments of the mind. These are the qualities whose influence will last, when the lustre of all that once sparkled and dazzled has passed away.

VOL. I. Sermon XI. page 284—285.

COROLLARY.—Of the importance of religious principles to youth, to render them at once comfortable to themselves and advantageous

On the first Principles of Human Nature.

vantageous to others, this chapter, though short, contains abundant arguments. It directs to permanent and durable sources of comfort, and shews the propriety of discarding the transient expedients of a day, which will always fail their advocates, when they are of the greatest moment, and mislead their votaries into all the mazes of dangers that are inextricable, and mischiefs incalculable.

CHAP. III.

*On the first Principles of Human Nature,
and Causes of their Perversion.*

THERE are few persons, if any, in the world, in whose minds, notwithstanding

On the first Principles of Human Nature.

standing the lapse of human nature from its original honour, several good principles do not still remain. In every breast are found some benevolent affections, and conscience still retains a sense of the distinction between moral good and evil. These principles of virtue are always susceptible of improvement; and, in favourable situations, might have a happy influence on practice. But such is the frailty of our nature, and so numerous are the temptations to evil, that they are in perpetual hazard of being either totally effaced, or so far weakened as to produce no effect on the conduct. Yet are there but few who do not set out in the world at first with
good

On the first Principles of Human Nature.

good dispositions. The warmth which belongs to youth naturally exerts itself in generous feelings and sentiments of honour; in strong attachments to friends, and the other emotions of a kind and tender heart. Almost all the plans with which persons have been liberally educated begin the world, are connected with honourable views. At that period they repudiate and despise whatever is mean and base. It is pleasing to them to think of commanding the esteem of those among whom they live, and of acquiring a name among men. But, alas! how soon does this flattering prospect begin to be overcast! Desires of pleasure usher in temptation, and

On the first Principles of Human Nature.

and forward the growth of disorderly passions. Ministers of vice are seldom wanting to encourage, and flatter the passions of the young. Inferiors study to creep into favour, by servile obsequiousness to all their desires and humours. Glad to find any apology for the indulgences of which they are fond, the young too readily listen to the voice of those who suggest to them, that strict notions of religion, order, and virtue, are old-fashioned and illiberal; that the restraints which they impose are only fit to be prescribed by those who are in the first state of pupillage.

Soothing as such insinuations are to the youthful and inconsiderate, their
first

On the first Principles of Human Nature.

first steps in vice are still cautious and timid, and occasionally checked by remorse. But as they begin to mingle more in the world, and emerge into the circles of gaiety and pleasure, they find that these loose ideas are countenanced by general practice, and they gradually become bolder in liberties both of speech and action. If they had been bred to business, they begin to tire of industry, and look with contempt on the plodding race of mortals. If they be of superior rank, they think it becomes them to resemble their equals; to assume that freedom of behaviour, that air of forwardness, that tone of dissipation, that easy negligence of those with whom

On the first Principles of Human Nature.

whom they converse and associate, which appear fashionable in high life. If affluence of fortune, either in possession or expectation, unhappily concur to favour, their inclinations, amusements and diversions succeed in perpetual round; night and day are confounded; and they run into many degrees of excess, disagreeable even to themselves, merely from weak complaisance, and the fear of being ridiculed by their loose associates. Among these, the most hardened and determined always take the lead. The rest follow them with implicit submission, and make proficiency in the school of iniquity in exact proportion to the weakness

ness

On the first Principles of Human Nature

ness of their understandings, and the strength of their passions.

How many pass away, after this manner the most valuable years of their life, tossed in a whirlpool of what cannot be called pleasure, so much as mere giddiness and folly? In the habits of perpetual connexion with idle or licentious company, all reflection is lost; while, circulated from one empty head, and one thoughtless heart to another, folly shoots up into all its most ridiculous forms; prompts the extravagant unmeaning frolic in private, or sallies forth in public into mad riot; impelled sometimes by intoxication, sometimes by mere levity of spirits. Should we
still

On the first Principles of Human Nature.

still admit, that much good nature may yet remain; that generosity and attachments may be found, and that even some awe of religion may subsist, and some remains of those good impressions which were made upon the mind in early days; it may then be possible to reclaim such persons, and to form them for useful and respectable stations in the world. This may still be effected if virtuous and improving society should happily succeed to the place of that idle crew with whom they have before associated; if important business should occur, to bring them into a different sphere of action; or if some seasonable stroke of affliction should in mercy be

On the first Principles of Human Nature.

sent to recal them to themselves, and to awaken serious and manly thoughts. But if youth, and vigour, and flowing fortune continue; if a similar succession of companions go on to amuse them, to engross their time, and to stir up their passions; the day of ruin,—let them take heed and beware! the day of irrecoverable ruin begins to draw nigh. Fortune is squandered; health is broken; friends are offended, affronted, estranged; aged parents, perhaps, sent afflicted and mourning to the dust.

Vol. III. Sermon VI. page 100-106.

COROLLORY.—In this chapter is delineated in plain but strong terms, the nature of the human mind, and the methods
by

On the first Principles of Human Nature.

by which it is liable to be perverted. It affords an instruction to youth of the utmost moment, to which every step they take, when they are just entering on the theatre of life, ought to have an aspect. This celebrated writer is equally averse, in his beneficial addresses, from affording the least countenance to a sour and morose conduct, as from its opposite character of levity and unthinking dissipation. Retire then, my young friends, into your parlour or your study; and let his salutary admonitions have their full operation on your judgment and discretion.

Importance of Right Conduct in Youth.

CHAP. IV.

The happiness and dignity of manhood depend upon the conduct of the youthful age.

LET not the season of youth be barren of improvements, which are essential to your felicity and honour. Your character is now of your own forming; your fate is, in some measure, put into your own hands. Your nature is as yet pliant and soft. Habits have not established their dominion. Prejudices have not pre-occupied your understanding. The world has not had time to contract and debase your affections. All your powers are more vigorous, dis-

embarrassed,

Importance of Right Conduct in Youth.

embarrassed, and free, than they will be at any future period. Whatever impulse you now give to your desires and passions, the direction is likely to continue. It will form the channel in which your life is to run; nay, it may determine an everlasting issue. Consider, then, the employment of this important period, as the highest trust which shall ever be committed to you; as, in a great measure, decisive of your happiness, in time, and in eternity. As in the succession of the seasons, each, by the invariable laws of nature, affects the productions of what is next in course; so, in human life, every period of our age, according as it is well or ill spent,

Importance of Right Conduct in Youth.

influences the happiness of that which is to follow. Virtuous youth gradually brings forward accomplished and flourishing manhood; and such manhood passes of itself, without uneasiness, into respectable and tranquil old age. But when nature is turned out of its regular course, disorder takes place in the moral, just as in the vegetable world. If the spring put forth no blossoms, in summer there will be no beauty, and in autumn no fruit: So, if youth be trifled away without improvement, manhood will be contemptible, and old age miserable.

Vol. I. Sermon XI. page 286—288.

COROLLARY.

Importance of Right Conduct in Youth.

COROLLARY.—The great importance of directing the youthful mind to rational and manly reflections, at its first introduction on the busy stage of the world, is manifested in the short chapter we have just perused. Let me advise them to consider it well. It is the plain dictate of common sense. It is the voice of cultivated reason. It alike defies the imputation of selfish monkery, and of interested priestcraft. Dr. Blair was aware of both these objections of atheists and infidels; and all his doctrines are the purest emanations of sincerity and truth.

Piety to God.

CHAP. V.

Piety to God the foundation of good morals.

PIETY to God is the first thing to be recommended, as the foundation of good morals, and as a disposition particularly graceful and becoming in youth. To be void of it, argues a cold heart, destitute of some of the best affections which belong to that age. Youth is the season of warm and generous emotions. The heart should then, spontaneously, rise into the admiration of what is great; glow with the love of what is fair and excellent

Piety to God.

excellent; and melt at the discovery of tenderness and goodness.— Where can any object be found, so proper to kindle those affections, as the Father of the Universe, and the Author of all felicity? Unmoved by veneration, can you contemplate that grandeur and majesty, which his works every where display? Untouched by gratitude, can you view that profusion of good, which, in this pleasing season of life, his beneficent hand pours around you? Happy in the love and affection of those with whom you are connected, look up to the Supreme Being, as the inspirer of all the friendship which has ever been shewn you by others; himself, your best and
your

Piety to God.

your first friend; formerly, the supporter of your infancy, and the guide of your childhood; now, the guardian of your youth, and the hope of your coming years. View religious homage, as a natural expression of gratitude to him for all his goodness. Consider it as the service of the God of your fathers; of him, to whom your parents devoted you; of him, whom in former ages your ancestors honoured; and by whom they are now rewarded and blessed in heaven. Connected with so many tender sensibilities of soul, let religion be with you, not the cold and barren offspring of speculation, but the warm and vigorous dictate of the heart.

Piety to God.

COROLLARY.—This pathetic appeal to the calm and unbiassed reason of youth, merits more than common regard, and comprehends more than common interest. It establishes a principle and motive of action, which more than any other, has the fairest tendency to ensure a due observance. It is natural. It is uncontrollable. In every mind but that of a determined atheist, it must enforce conviction. To the advocate of natural or revealed religion, it equally, it effectually appeals. From the supporter of reason, or to the patron of enthusiasm, it alike demands assent.

On observing the Operations of Nature.

CHAP. VI.

On observing the Operations of Nature.

A SENSE of God upon our thoughts, will lead us to view him as the author of nature. With his works we are in every place surrounded. We can nowhere cast our eyes, without discerning the hand of him who formed them, if the grossness of our minds will only allow us to behold him. Let giddy and thoughtless men turn aside a little from the haunts of riot. Let them stand still, and contemplate the works of God. Let them make trial of the effect which such contemplation would produce.

On observing the Operations of Nature.

produce. It were good for them, were they more acquainted with his works; good for them, that from the societies of loose and dissolute men, of vain or unthinking persons, they would retreat to the scenes of nature; would oftener dwell among them, and enjoy their beauties. This would form them to the relish of uncorrupted innocent pleasures; this would make them feel the value of calm enjoyments, as superior to the noise and turbulence of licentious gaiety. From the harmony of nature and of nature's works, they would learn to hear sweeter sounds than what arise merely from the viol, the tabret, and the pipe.

Yet

On observing the Operations of Nature.

Yet are music and wine, in themselves, things of an innocent nature; and, when temperately enjoyed, may be employed for useful purposes. They afford relaxation from the oppressive cares of life; and they promote friendly intercourse among men. The opulent are not prohibited from enjoying the good things of this world, which providence has bestowed upon them. Religion neither abolishes the distinction of ranks, nor interferes with a moderate and decent indulgence of pleasure. It is the criminal abuse of pleasure which calls for our censure. It is that thoughtless and intemperate enjoyment of it which wholly absorbs

On observing the Operations of Nature.

sorbs the time and attention of men, that demands condemnation; that which obliterates every serious thought of the proper business of life, and effaces the sense of religion and of God. The works of nature give occasion to higher thoughts. Let me call on you, my friends, to catch some interval of reflection, some serious moment, for looking with thoughtful eye on the world around you. Lift your view to that immense arch of heaven which encompasses you above. Behold the sun in all his splendor, rolling over your head by day; and the moon by night, in mild and serene majesty, surrounded with that host of stars which present to your imagination

tion

On observing the Operations of Nature.

tion an innumerable multitude of worlds. Listen to the awful voice of thunder. Listen to the roar of the tempest and the ocean. Survey the wonders that fill the earth which you inhabit. Contemplate a steady and powerful hand, bringing round spring and summer, autumn and winter, in regular course; decorating this earth with innumerable beauties, diversifying it with innumerable inhabitants, pouring forth comforts on all that live; and, at the same time, overawing the nations with the violence of the elements, when it pleases the Creator to let them forth. After you have viewed yourselves as surrounded with such a scene of wonders; after you have

have

On observing the Operations of Nature.

have beheld, on every hand, such an astonishing display of majesty united with wisdom and goodness; are you not seized with solemn and serious awe? Is there not something which whispers you within, that to this great Creator reverence and homage are due by all the rational beings whom he has made; Admitted to be spectators of his works, placed in the midst of so many great and interesting objects, can you believe that you were brought hither for no purpose, but to immerse yourselves in gross and brutal, or, at best, in trifling pleasures; lost to all sense of the wonders you behold; lost to all reverence to that God who gave you being, and

On observing the Operations of Nature.

who has erected this amazing fabric of nature, on which you look only with stupid and unmeaning eyes? No; let the scenes which you behold prompt correspondent feelings; let them awaken you from the degrading intoxication of licentiousness into nobler emotions. Every object which you view in nature, whether great or small, serves to instruct you. The star and the insect, the fiery meteor and the flower of spring, the verdant field and the lofty mountains, all exhibit a supreme power, before which you ought to tremble and adore; all preach the doctrine, all inspire the spirit of devotion and reverence.

On observing the Operations of Nature.

COROLLARY.—The lesson which is here taught us, is plain but strong. It does not condemn pleasures; it only regulates them. It shews nothing of pedantary; and it is equally free from enthusiasm. It calls for a becoming attention to the operations of nature; but it has also a higher aim, to lead youth in particular, and all mankind in general, to the God of nature. It does not require us to renounce our faculties. It does not call upon us to stifle and suppress our senses. It only points out the path in which with propriety they may tread, and the road on which they may safely travel, without losing any one substantial enjoyment of those happy prospects, which present themselves in the journey on their right hand and on their left.

Religion never to be treated with Levity.

CHAP. VII.

Religion never to be treated with levity.

IMPRESS your minds with reverence for all that is sacred. Let no wantonness of youthful spirits, no compliance with the intemperate mirth of others, ever betray you into profane sallies. Besides the guilt which is thereby incurred, nothing gives a more odious appearance of petulance and presumption to youth, than the affectation of treating religion with levity. Instead of being an evidence of superior understanding, it discovers a pert and shallow mind ;

Religion never to be treated with Levity.

mind; which, vain of the first smatterings of knowledge, presumes to make light of what the rest of mankind revere. At the same time, you are not to imagine, that when exhorted to be religious, you are called upon to become more formal and solemn in your manners than others of the same years; or to erect yourselves into supercilious reprovers of those around you. The spirit of true religion breathes gentleness and affability. It gives a native unaffected ease to the behaviour. It is social, kind, and chearful: far removed from that gloomy and illiberal superstition, which clouds the brow, sharpens the temper, dejects the spirits, and

Religion never to be treated with Levity.

teaches men to fit themselves for another world, by neglecting the concerns of this. Let your religion, on the contrary, connect preparation for heaven with an honourable discharge of the duties of active life. Of such religion discover, on every proper occasion, that you are not ashamed; but avoid making any unnecessary ostentation of it before the world.

Vol. I. Sermon XI. page 291—292.

COROLLARY.—Nothing is more to be dreaded, than the man who is forgetful of his own condition in the world, and by a wicked propensity to corrupt others, endeavours to poison the minds of youth against every thing that is decent or commendable

Religion never to be treated with Levity.

mendable in life. Of such persons young men should be careful to beware, as much as they would shun the face of a serpent. The society of such men is more dangerous than an epidemic fever, and more to be dreaded than the pestilence. It contaminates every thing which it approaches. Before you give up yourself to such guidance, ask at least this question, Am I a man, or a brute? and think for one moment what it is to be one, or what belongs to the character of the other.

On the due Regulation of Pleasure.

CHAP. VIII.

On the due regulation of Pleasure.

THOUGH religion condemns such pleasures as are immoral, it is chargeable with no improper austerity in respect of those which are innocent. By the cautious discipline which that prescribes, think not that it excludes you from all gay enjoyment of life. Within the compass of that sedate spirit, to which it forms you, all that is innocently pleasing will be found to lie. It is a mistake to imagine, that in constant effusions of giddy mirth, or in
that

On the due Regulation of Pleasure.

that flutter of spirit which is excited by a round of diversions, the chief enjoyment of our state consists. Were this the case, the vain and the frivolous would be on better terms for happiness than the wise, the great, and the good. To arrange the plans of amusement, or to preside in the haunts of jollity, would be more desirable, than to exert the highest efforts of mental powers for the benefit of nations. A consequence so absurd, is sufficient to explode the principle from which it flows. To the amusements and lesser joys of the world, religion assigns their proper place. It admits of them, as relaxations from care, as instruments of promoting

On the due Regulation of Pleasure.

promoting the union of men, and of enlivening their social intercourse. But though it does not censure or condemn them, as long as they are kept within due bounds; neither does it propose them as rewards to the virtuous, or as the principal objects of their pursuit. To such it points out nobler ends of action. Their felicity it engages them to seek in the discharge of an useful, an upright, and honourable part in life; and, as the habitual tenor of their mind, it promotes chearfulness, and discourages levity. Between these two there is a wide distinction; and the mind which is most open to levity, is frequently a stranger to chearfulness.

Transports

On the use Regulation of Pleasure.

Transports of intemperate mirth are often no more than flashes from the dark cloud; and in proportion to the violence of the effulgence is the succeeding gloom. Levity may be the forced production of folly or vice; cheerfulness is the natural offspring of wisdom and virtue only. The one is an occasional agitation; the other a permanent habit. The one degrades the character; the other is perfectly consistent with the dignity of reason, and the steady and manly spirit of religion. To aim at a constant succession of high and vivid sensations of pleasure, is an idea of happiness altogether chimerical. Calm and temperate
enjoyment

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enjoyment is the utmost that is allotted to man. Beyond this, we struggle in vain to raise our state; and in fact, depress our joys by endeavouring to heighten them. Instead of those fallacious hopes of perpetual festivity, with which the world would allure us, religion confers upon us a chearful tranquillity. Instead of dazzling us with meteors of joy which sparkle and expire, it sheds around us a calm and steady light. Let us, then, shew the world, that a religious temper, is a temper sedate, but not sad; that a religious behaviour, is a behaviour regulated, but not stiff and formal. Thus we shall pass through the various changes of the world, with
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the least discomposure; and we shall vindicate religion from the reproaches of those who would attribute to it either enthusiastic joys, or slavish terrors. We shall shew, that it is a rational rule of life, worthy of the perfection of God, and suited to the nature and state of man.

Vol. I. Sermon XIV. page 396—399.

COROLLARY.—The mistaken notions of young persons, with which they are too apt to feed their fond and vain imaginations, are productive of a numerous train of evils, that are solely occasioned by a want of common thought and reflection. In wishing to be considered as men, they discard the only principle, and overlook
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On the due Regulation of Pleasure.

the criterion, which makes the difference between the human and the brute creation. Suffering themselves to be misled by some gaudy and glittering shew of pleasure, they never take time to contemplate its vanity, or to trace its insufficiency, to ensure permanent happiness and satisfaction. Beware, my young friends, how you split upon this hidden rock, and pause a while ere you launch into practices, which, however they may gratify your passions for a time, will assuredly terminate in disappointment and in misery.

CHAP. IX.

Modesty and docility to be joined to piety.

TO piety join modesty and docility, reverence of your parents, and submission to those who are your superiors in knowledge, in station, and in years. Dependence and obedience belong to youth. Modesty is one of its chief ornaments; and has ever been esteemed a presage of rising merit. When entering on the career of life, it is your part, not to assume the reins as yet into your hands; but to commit yourselves to the guidance of the more experienced, and

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Modesty and Docility.

to become wise by the wisdom of those who have gone before you. Of all the follies incident to youth, there are none which either deform its present appearance, or blast the prospect of its future prosperity, more than self-conceit, presumption, and obstinacy. By checking its natural progress in improvement, they fix it in long immaturity; and frequently produce mischiefs which can never be repaired. Yet these are vices too commonly found among the young. Big with enterprize, and elated by hope, they resolve to trust for success to none but themselves. Full of their own abilities, they deride the admonitions which are given

Modesty and Docility.

them by their friends, as the timorous suggestions of age. Too wise to learn, too impatient to deliberate, too forward to be restrained, they plunge, with precipitate indiscretion, into the midst of all the dangers with which life abounds, Positive as you now are in your opinions, and confident in your assertions, be assured, that the time approaches when both men and things will appear to you in a different light. Many characters which you now admire, will, by and by, sink in your esteem; and many opinions, of which you are at present most tenacious, will alter as you advance in years. Distrust, therefore, that glare of youthful presumption.

Modesty and Docility.

which dazzles your eyes. Abound not in your own sense. Put not yourselves forward with too much eagerness; nor imagine, that, by the impetuosity of juvenile ardour, you can overturn systems which have been long established, and change the face of the world. By patient and gradual progression in improvement, you may, in due time, command lasting esteem. But by assuming, at present, a tone of superiority, to which you have no good title, you will disgust those, whose approbation it is most important to gain. Forward vivacity may fit you to be the companion of an idle hour; but more solid qualities must recommend you to the wise,
and

Modesty and Docility.

and mark you out for importance and consideration in subsequent life.

Vol. I. Sermon XI. page 292—294.

COROLLARY.—A modest deportment has ever been respected and admired, when it does not dwindle into a sheepish or silly bashfulness and unmeaning timidity; as a supercilious, or a pert and forward conduct will, in the estimation of the rational world, be treated with scorn and disregard. In the one the judicious and discerning part of the world, will discover the latent sparks of merit, and feel an interest in extracting them for the benefit and advantage of mankind; in the other, a cold indifference will mark their most favourable demeanor, and be often followed by insult and contempt. Let my

Sincerity and Truth Recommended.

young readers beware, how they give cause for the one, or lay a foundation of hope for the other!

CHAP. X.

Sincerity and truth recommended.

IT is necessary to recommend to you sincerity and truth. This is the basis of every virtue. That darkness of character, where we can see no heart; those foldings of art, through which no native affection is allowed to penetrate, present an object, unamiable in every season of life, but particularly odious in youth.

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Sincerity and Truth recommended.

If, at an age when the heart was warm, when the emotions are strong, and when nature is expected to shew herself free and open, you can already smile and deceive; what are we to look for, when you shall be longer hackneyed in the ways of men; when interest shall have completed the obduration of your heart, and when experience shall have improved you in all the arts of guile? Disimulation in youth, is the fore-runner of perfidy in old age. Its first appearance is the fatal omen of growing depravity and of future shame. It degrades parts and learning; it obscures the lustre of every accomplishment; and it sinks you into contempt with

Sincerity and Truth recommended

God and man. As you value, therefore, the approbation of heaven, or the esteem of the world, cultivate the love of truth. In all your proceedings, be direct and consistent. Ingenuity and candour possess the most powerful charm; they bespeak universal favour; they carry an apology for almost every failing. The path of truth is a plain and safe path; that of falsehood is a perplexing maze. After the first departure from sincerity, it is not in your power to stop. One artifice unavoidably leads on to another; till, as the intricacy of the labyrinth increases, you are left entangled in your own snare. Deceit discovers a little mind,
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Sincerity and truth recommended.

which stops at temporary expedients, without rising to comprehensive views of conduct. It betrays, at the same time, a dastardly spirit. It is the resource of one who wants courage to avow his designs, or to rest upon himself. But openness of character displays that generous boldness, which ought to distinguish youth. To set out in the world with no other principle than a crafty attention to interest, betokens one who is destined for creeping through the inferior walks of life. To give an early preference to honour above gain, when they stand in competition; to despise every advantage, which cannot be attained without dishonest arts; to

Sincerity and Truth recommended.

brook no meanness, and to stoop to no dissimulation; are the indications of a great mind,—the presages of future eminence and distinction in life. At the same time, this virtuous sincerity is perfectly consistent with the most prudent vigilance and caution. It is opposed to cunning, not to true wisdom. It is not the simplicity of a weak and improvident, but the candour of an enlarged and noble mind; it is the mark of one who scorns deceit, because he accounts it both base and unprofitable; of one who seeks no disguise, because he needs none to hide him.

Vol. I. Sermon XI. page 295—297.

Sincerity and Truth recommended.

COROLLARY.—The advantages of sincerity as a social attribute, cannot be too highly estimated. Without it, society could not possibly subsist. The man who has been once detected of fraud and deceit, in whatever way it may be manifested, will ever after be suspected. His character in life will be sunk and degraded. He will be looked at with caution, and regarded with jealousy. And is this a condition, of which any one can be desirous? Learn, my young friends, to profit by the caution; to secure your integrity and claim to uprightness, by a careful and conscientious adherence to sincerity in all your actions.

On the chequered Condition of Life.

CHAP. XI.

On the chequered condition of life.

IT is a principal instruction which a calm and temperate survey of the world affords us, that the present life is a mixture of good and evil. This is a matter of fact, which can be denied by none. The slightest inspection makes it evident, that nothing here is unallayed and pure. Every man's state is chequered with alternate griefs and joys, disappointment and success. No condition is altogether stable. No life preserves always the same tenor. The vicissitudes
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of the world sometimes bring forward the afflicted into more comfortable circumstances; and often trouble the joy of the prosperous. This is the train in which human affairs have ever been found to proceed; and in which we may expect them always to go on.

Yet such is the misfortune, that few think of applying this to their own case. The bulk of mankind discover as much confidence in prosperity, and as much impatience under the least reverse, as if providence had first given them an assurance that their prosperity was never to change, and had afterwards cheated their hopes. But reason teaches men a different lesson. It

advices

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advises us to adjust our mind to the mixed state in which we find ourselves placed; never to presume, never to despair; to be thankful for the goods which at present we enjoy, and to expect the evils that may succeed. Thou hast been admitted to partake of the feast of life. Its good things are distributed in various portions, among the guests. Thou hast had thine allotted share. Complain not when thy portion is removed. It is not permitted to any one to remain always at the banquet.

There are many reasons why we, who receive good from the hand of God, should receive with patience the evils which he is pleased to inflict. If he
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has already bestowed good things upon us, does not this afford sufficient evidence for our believing, that the evils which he sends, are not wantonly inflicted? Did we live in a world which bore the marks of a malicious or cruel governor, there might be some reason for distrusting every step of his conduct. But in the world which we inhabit, we behold the plainest marks of predominant goodness. We behold the structure of the universe, the order of nature, the general course of providence, obviously arranged with a benevolent regard to the welfare of men. All the art and contrivance of which the divine works are full, point to this end;

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end; and the more they are explored, create the firmer belief, that the goodness of the Deity gave rise to the system of creation. Ought we not, then, to conclude, that in such parts of the divine administration as appear to us harsh and severe, the same goodness continues to preside, though exercised in a hidden and mysterious manner.

Let us but consider, whether, if some powerful friend had placed us in an opulent and comfortable station, and, in the general conduct of our affairs, had discovered the most disinterested kindness, we would not ascribe some occasional discouragements to some unknown reason or cause, rather than to unfaithfulness

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unfaithfulness and cruelty? Ought not the experience we have had, and the discovery which all nature affords, of the divine goodness, to lead us to put a like construction on the evils which we suffer from a hand that hath so frequently loaded us with good? Have we forgotten, in the midst of our complaints, who brought us into the light of day; who watched over our helpless infancy; who reared our growing childhood; and through ten thousand surrounding dangers, has been our protector and guardian until this day? How often has he rescued us from sickness and death, and made our hearts glad with unexpected comforts? Now, that
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some cloud is thrown over our prosperity, or some blessing withdrawn, in which for a time we had rejoiced, can we imagine that there is no good cause for this change of his proceeding? Shall we suspect that his nature is entirely altered? No, let us say, This is my infirmity, but I will remember the works of the world.

But we ought farther to consider, how little we deserve the good things we receive, and how justly we merit the evils we suffer. In receiving a mixed portion, therefore, of which the goods are above our deserts, and the evils below them, to complain, in such a case, is unreasonable; there is more
ground

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ground to be thankful. All, it is true, have not deserved evil equally. Yet all of us deserve it more or less. Whatever innocence any of us may plead, nay, whatever merit we may claim, with respect to men and the world, we suffer no more than what we deserve from the governor of the world; and of his displeasure, we know that the wrath of man, is no other than the instrument. Not only all of us have done evil, but God has a just title to punish us for it. But although a man know that he deserves punishment, he will not allow every one to inflict it. A child will submit to his parents, a servant to his master, a subject to the magistrate,

On the chequered Condition of Life.

when he would not bear correction from another hand. But no parent can have so compleat a right to authority over his children, no master over his servants, no magistrate over his subjects, as the Almighty hath over us.

Vol. IV. Sermon XVI. page 309—311, 315—320.

COROLLARY.—That there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, though it may be partially true, ought never to be considered as a general maxim. That all things come alike to all, is as little to be received as a general doctrine. We are not to throw any blame upon providence, if in some instances we find the wicked prosperous, and if in a few others we observe the righteous depressed. It should
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not be permitted to stagger our faith in the justice of the Almighty; nor tempt us to murmur at his dispensations, when adverse fortune at any time overtakes us. In leading us to be contented with the allotments of Providence, it prepares us to receive our trials with patience in this world, and excites us to look for our rewards in another life, confident in the promises which are made unto those who persevere in their duty to the end of the present.

Benevolence and Humanity.

CHAP. XII.

Benevolence and Humanity.

YOUTH is the proper season of cultivating the benevolent and humane affections. As a great part of your happiness is to depend on the connections which you form with others, it is of high importance that you acquire betimes the temper and the manners, which will render such connections comfortable. Let a sense of justice be the foundation of all your social qualities. In your most early intercourse with the world, and even in your youthful

Benevolence and Humanity.

youthful amusements, let no unfairness be found. Engrave on your mind that sacred rule, of 'doing all things to others, according as you wish that they should do unto you.' For this end, impress yourself with a deep sense of the original and natural equality of men. Whatever advantages of birth or fortune you possess, never display them with an ostentatious superiority. Leave the subordinations of rank, to regulate the intercourse of more advanced years. At present it becomes you to act among your companions, as man with man. Remember how unknown to you are the vicissitudes of the world; and how often they, on whom ignorant and contemp-

Benevolence and Humanity.

tuous young men once looked down with scorn, have risen to be their superiors in future years. Compassion is an emotion of which you ought never to be ashamed. Graceful in youth is the tear of sympathy, and the heart that melts at the tale of woe. Let not ease and indulgence contract your affections, and wrap you up in selfish enjoyment. Accustom yourselves to think of the distresses of human life; of the solitary cottage, the dying parent, and the weeping orphan. Never sport with pain and distress, in any of your amusements; never treat even the meanest insect with wanton cruelty.

Benevolence and Humanity.

COROLLARY.—Though the nature of society requires different ranks and orders among mankind, it is only in the state of progress to advanced life that these distinctions become more conspicuous: The friendships of early youth are of a less general extent, and are naturally confined within narrower limits; and the exercises of compassion, whatever may be our condition in life, are conducted on a more contracted scale. But still, it is an important consideration for youth, never to lose sight of humanity and tenderness, as a disposition that will soften the unavoidable evils of life, and contribute to sweeten the cares and sorrows with which they may at any time be surrounded.

Youthful Friendships.

CHAP. XIII.

Youthful Friendships.

IN young minds, there is commonly a strong propensity to particular intimacies and friendships. Youth, indeed, is the season, when friendships are sometimes formed, which not only continue through succeeding life, but which glow to the last, with a tenderness unknown to the connections begun in cooler years. This propensity, therefore, is not to be discouraged; though at the same time it must be regulated with much circumspection and care. Too many

Youthful Friendships

many of the pretended friendships of youth, are mere combinations in pleasure. They are often founded on capricious likings; suddenly contracted, and as suddenly dissolved. Sometimes they are the effect of interested complaisance and flattery on the one side, and of credulous fondness on the other. Beware of such rash and dangerous connections, which may afterwards load you with shame and dishonour. Remember that by the character of those whom you choose for your friends, your own is likely to be formed, and will certainly be judged of by the world. Be slow, therefore, and cautious in contracting intimacy; but
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Youthful Friendships.

when a virtuous friendship is once established, consider it as a sacred engagement. Expose not yourselves to the reproach of lightness and inconstancy, which always bespeak; either a trifling, or a base mind. Reveal none of the secrets of your friend. Be faithful to his interests. Forsake him not in danger. Abhor the thought of acquiring any advantage by his prejudice or hurt.

Vol. I. Sermon XI. page 299—301.

COROLLARY.—As our prosperity in life, no less than the common comforts of society, depend greatly on the nature of our connections and friendships, it must be of the first importance to youth rightly to appreciate,

Youthful Friendships.

appreciate, and correctly to estimate, the merits or demerits of those with whom they associate. One fatal step in this particular, will be sufficient to blast their fairest hopes, and to frustrate their most reasonable expectations. With the lot to which some are providentially inured from necessity, the choice of others, who have brighter prospects, too frequently is at variance; and whilst the former, with very moderate talents, by a persevering industry, are gradually raised from obscurity, so as often to attain the highest honours, the latter, by indulging a spirit of independence and a competency of fortune, without prudent management, wantonly discard the advantages of Providence, and dissipate the means of advancing their comforts in thoughtless profusion, or indolent inactivity

Temperance in Pleasure recommended.

inactivity. Can the pattern of Hogarth's industrious and idle apprentice escape my young readers? Does it not afford them a most striking lesson?

CHAP. XIV.

Temperance in Pleasure recommended.

LET me particularly exhort youth to temperance in pleasure. Let me admonish them, to beware of that rock, on which thousands, from race to race, continue to split. The love of pleasure, natural to man in every period of his life, glows at this age with excessive
ardour.

Temperance in Pleasure recommended.

ardour. Novelty has fresh charms, as yet, to every gratification. The world appears to spread a continual feast; and health, vigour, and high spirits, invite them to partake of it without restraint. In vain we warn them of latent dangers. Religion is accused of insufferable severity, in prohibiting enjoyment; and the old, when they offer their admonitions, are upbraided with having forgot that they once were young.—And yet, my friends, to what do the restraints of religion, and the counsels of age, with respect to pleasure, amount? They may all be comprised in a few words—not to hurt yourselves, and not to hurt others, by your pursuit
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Temperance in Pleasure recommended.

of pleasure. Within these bounds, pleasure is lawful; beyond them it becomes criminal; it is ruinous. Are these restraints any other than what a wise man would choose to impose on himself? We call you not to renounce pleasure, but to enjoy it in safety. Instead of abridging it, exhort you to pursue it on an extensive plan. We propose measures for securing its possession, and for prolonging its duration.

Vol. I. Sermon XI, page 201, 302.

COROLLARY.—Dr. Blair has happily obviated in this short chapter one of the most general obstacles to the principles and practice of religion. As an enemy to
pleasure,

Temperance in Pleasure recommended.

pleasure, it has often been represented, but unjustly. As friendly to true and solid pleasure, even confined to the satisfaction of the present life, we are here instructed to view it. That unrestrained pleasure is dangerous, has never been denied. That it is so in particular to youth, must be admitted. If pleasure, then, is to a certain degree permissible; let me strongly conjure my young readers to pause, and intreat them to consider well the several degrees of it, which may or may not be observed with innocence. It will preserve them from many a bitter reflection; it will ensure to them many a rational comfort.

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On the proper Management of our Time.

CHAP. XV.

On the proper Management of our Time.

TO be impressed with a just sense of the value of time, it is highly requisite that we should introduce order into its management. Consider well, then, how much depends upon it, and how fast it flies away. The bulk of men are in nothing more capricious and inconsistent than in their appreciation of time. When they think of it as the measure of their continuance on earth, they highly prize it, and with the greatest anxiety seek to lengthen it out. But
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when they view it in separate parcels, they appear to hold it in contempt, and squander it with inconsiderate profusion. While they complain that life is short, they are often wishing its different periods at an end. Covetous of every other possession, of time only they are prodigal. They allow every idle man to be master of this property, and make every frivolous occupation welcome that can help them to consume it. Among those who are so careless of time, it is not to be expected that order should be observed in its distribution. But by this fatal neglect, how many materials of severe and lasting regret are they laying up in

On the proper Management of our Time.

store for themselves! The time which they suffer to pass away in the midst of confusion, bitter repentance seeks afterwards in vain to recal. What was omitted to be done at its proper moment, arises to be the torment of some future season. Manhood is disgraced by the consequences of neglected youth. Old age, oppressed by cares that belonged to a former period, labours under a burden not its own. At the close of life the dying man beholds with anguish that his days are finishing, when his preparation for eternity is scarcely commenced. Such are the effects of a disorderly waste of time, in not attending to its value. Every thing in the life of such persons is misplaced.

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On the proper Management of our Time.

He, on the contrary, who is orderly in the distribution of his time, takes the proper method of escaping those manifold evils. By proper management he prolongs it. He lives much in little space; more in a few years than others do in many. He can live to God and his own soul, and at the same time attend to all the lawful interests of the present world. He looks back on the past, and provides for the future. He catches the hours as they fly. They are marked down for useful purposes, and their memory remains. But by the man of confusion those hours fleet like a shadow. His days and years are either blanks, of which he has no
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On the proper Management of our Time.

remembrance, or they are filled up with a confused and irregular succession of unfinished transactions. He remembers indeed that he has been busy, yet he can give little account of the business which has employed him.

Vol. II. Sermon I. page 9—12.

COROLLARY.—If our judgment of time in youth and age is so very different, as the world in general has but little disposition to dispute, it would be well if our young friends were to pause occasionally, before they permit their spirits to run riot, and contract an indifference for their manner of spending it. Shall we always think as we now do, would be a question, which we should do well to return a proper answer. The experience of others,
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at least of the reputable part of the world, if we will but attend to it, must convince us, that a proper estimate of our true state and condition, as it consists in a right use of our time, cannot fail to be of the utmost importance to us.

CHAP. XVI.

On a judicious Management of our Fortune.

WHATEVER may be the fortune of any one, it is a matter of the most essential nature, that its administration should proceed with method and œconomy. From time to time I would admonish my young friends to examine

Judicious Management of our Fortune.

their situation. I would advise you to provide what is necessary, before you indulge in what is superfluous. Study to do justice, before you affect the praise of liberality. Fix such a plan of living as you find that your circumstances will fairly admit, and adhere to it invariably against every temptation to improper excess.

No admonition is more necessary than this to the age in which we live; an age manifestly distinguished by a propensity to thoughtless profusion; wherein all the different ranks of men are observed to press with forward vanity on those who are above them; to vie with their superiors in every mode

Judicious Management of our Fortune.

mode of luxury and ostentation; and to seek no farther argument for justifying extravagance, than the fashion of the times, and the supposed necessity of living like others around them. This turn of mind begets contempt for sober and orderly plans of life. It overthrows all regard to domestic concerns and duties. It pushes men on to hazardous and visionary schemes of gain. It unfortunately unites the two extremes of grasping with rapaciousness, and of squandering with profusion. In the midst of such disorder, no prosperity can be of long continuance. While confusion grows upon men's affairs, and prodigality at the same

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time

Judicious Management of our Fortune.

time wastes their substance, poverty makes its advances like an armed man. They tremble at the view of the approaching evil ; but have lost the force of mind to make provision against it. Accustomed to move in a round of society and pleasures disproportioned to their condition, they are unable to break through the enchantments of habit ; and with their eyes open sink into the gulph which is before them. Necessity first betrays them into mean compliances ; next impels them to open crimes ; and, beginning with ostentation and extravagance, they end in infamy and guilt. Such are the consequences of neglecting order in our
worldly

Judicious Management of our Fortune.

worldly circumstances. Such is the circle in which the profuse and the dissolute daily run.—To what cause, so much as to the want of order, can we attribute those scenes of distress which so frequently excite our pity? families that once were flourishing, reduced to ruin; and the melancholy widow and neglected orphan thrown forth, friendless, upon the world? What cause been more fruitful in engendering those atrocious crimes which fill society with disquiet and terror; in training the gamester to fraud, the robber to violence, and the assassin to blood?

Be assured, my young friends, that order, frugality, and œconomy, are the
necessary

Judicious Management of our Fortune.

necessary supports of every personal and private virtue. How humble soever these qualities may appear, they are the basis on which liberty, independence, and true honour, must rise. He who has the steadiness to arrange his affairs with method and regularity, and to conduct his train of life agreeably to his circumstances, can be master of himself in every situation into which he may be thrown. He is under no necessity to flatter or to lie; to stoop to what is mean, or to commit what is criminal. But he who wants that firmness of mind, which the observance of order requires, is held in bondage to the world; he can neither
act

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act his part with courage as a man, nor with fidelity as a Christian. From the moment you have allowed yourselves to pass the line of œconomy, and live beyond your fortune, you have entered upon the path of danger. Precipices surround you on all sides. Every step which you take may lead to mischiefs that, as yet, lie hidden ; and to crimes that will end in your perdition.

Vol. II. Sermon I. page 12—15.

COROLLARY.—That ‘ riches,’ have been frequently ‘ kept for the owners thereof to their hurt,’ is a truth which attentive observation will at all times fully demonstrate. The dangers to which youth, under these circumstances, are exposed, have been
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been feelingly depicted by DR. BLAIR; and should operate as a warning, to all young men, to adopt a cautious and prudent conduct, more especially against the mischiefs of anticipating those fortunes, the possession of which depend on a variety of contingencies, and the extent of which is no less uncertain and precarious. An evil of this nature cannot be too carefully watched. It is a rock on which many a young man has split, before he has well got out of the harbour to undertake the voyage of life.

Whatever violates Nature to be avoided.

CHAP. XVII.

Whatever violates Nature, cannot afford true pleasure.

CONSULT your whole nature. Consider yourselves not only as sensitive, but as rational beings; not only as rational, but as social; not only as social, but as immortal. Whatever violates your nature in any of these respects, cannot afford true pleasure; any more than that which undermines an essential part of the vital system, can promote health. For the truth of this conclusion, we appeal, not merely to the

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Whatever violates Nature to be avoided.

the authority of religion, not only to the testimony of the aged, but to yourselves, and to your own experience. We ask, whether you have not found, that in the course of criminal excess, your pleasure was more than compensated by succeeding pain? Whether, if not from every particular instance, yet from every habit, at least, of unlawful gratification, there did not spring some thorn to wound you; there did not arise some consequence to make you repent of it in the issue? How long will you repeat the same round of pernicious folly, and tamely expose yourselves to be caught in the same snare? If you have any consideration,

Whatever violates Nature to be avoided.

or any firmness left, avoid those temptations, for which you have found yourselves unequal, with as much care as you would shun pestilential infection. Break of all connections with the loose and profligate.

Vol. I. Sermon XI. page 303, 304.

COROLLARY.—If pleasures are not restrained, by prudence and discretion, within reasonable and prudent limits, they will very soon cease to be such, and be productive, however persevered in, of a contrary effect. If men render themselves, by imprudence or excess, incapable of relishing and enjoying pleasures, they cease to be such, and no longer can be the objects of rational choice. They then

Whatever violates Nature to be avoided.

then become merely sensual, and are in no respect superior to those of brutes. Nay, they are inferior; for nature has pointed out to them the bounds of corporeal gratifications, whilst men, endowed with reason, despise all regulation, and, under the specious appearance of being thought superior to the rest of the world, degrade themselves below the level of apes and idiots. Is this, then, a desirable state for rational beings? Think! oh think! before the season of retrieving your errors has quite escaped through your hands, what must be the unavoidable result of such carelessness and inattention.

Irregular Pleasures.

CHAP. XVIII.

Irregular pleasures.

BY the unhappy excesses of irregular pleasures in youth, how many amiable dispositions are corrupted or destroyed! How many rising capacities and powers are suppressed! How many flattering hopes of parents and friends are totally extinguished! Who but must drop a tear over human nature, when he beholds that morning, which arose so bright, overcast with such untimely darkness; that good-humour, which once captivated all hearts, that vivacity which

Irregular Pleasures.

sparkled in every company, those abilities which were fitted for adorning the highest stations, all sacrificed at the shrine of low sensuality; and one who was formed for running the fair career of life in the midst of public esteem, cut off by his vices at the beginning of his course, or sunk for the whole of it into insignificancy and contempt?—These, O sinful Pleasure, are thy trophies! It is thus that, co-operating with the foe of God and man, thou degradest human honour, and blastest the opening prospects of human felicity!

Vol. I. Sermon XI. page 304, 305.

COROLLARY.—Dr. Blair has here depicted in glowing but faithful colours, the
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Irregular Pleasures.

the alarming effects of a deviation from the paths of parental obedience, and casting off the valuable admonitions and cautions of a faithful preceptor. He has not indeed, in express terms, illustrated his arguments against irregular pleasures by these instances; but they are obviously inferred, from the heart-rending reflection of the friend and the parent bewailing the miseries, occasioned by a desertion from the principles of virtue. Are my young readers aware of the precipice to which they are hasting with rapid steps? Let me warn them to stop, and remove the veil from before their eyes, to perceive their danger, before they rush on that irrecoverable gulph, whence no talents, natural or acquired, can possibly extricate them.

On preserving Order in our Amusements.

CHAP. XIX

On preserving order in amusements.

IT is of the utmost importance to young men, on their first entrance into life, to preserve moderation in their amusements, and allow them no more than their proper place; to study to keep them within due bounds; to mingle them in a temperate succession with serious duties, and the higher business of life. For human life cannot proceed to advantage without some measure of relaxation and entertainment. We require relief from care. We are
not

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not formed for a perpetual stretch of serious thought. By too intense and continued application, our feeble powers would soon be worn out. At the same time, from our propensity to ease and pleasure, amusement proves, among all ranks of men, the most dangerous foe to order. It tends incessantly to usurp and encroach, to widen its territories, to thrust itself into the place of more important concerns, and thereby to disturb and counteract the natural course of things. One frivolous amusement indulged out of season, will often carry perplexity and confusion through a long succession of affairs.

Amusements, therefore, though they

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be of an innocent kind, requires steady government, to keep them within a due and limited province. But such as are of an irregular and vicious nature, are not to be governed, but to be banished from every orderly society. As soon as a man seeks his happiness from the gaming table, the midnight revel, or any other haunts of licentiousness, confusion seizes upon him as its own. There will no longer be order in his family, nor order in his affairs, nor order in his time. The most important concerns of life are abandoned. Even the order of nature is by such persons inverted; night is changed into day, and day into night. Character, honour, and interest
itself,

On preserving Order in our Amusements.

itself, are trampled under foot. You may with certainty prognosticate the ruin of such persons to be just at hand. Disorder, arisen to its height, has nearly accomplished its work. The spots of death are upon them. Let every one who would escape the pestilential contagion fly with haste from their company.

Vol. II. Sermon I. page 15--17.

COROLLARY.—In addition to Dr. Blair's concluding admonition on this interesting subject, let me warn my young readers against every indulgence of amusing recreations, which are productive of expences to which your resources are inadequate, or infringe upon that time which

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ought to be devoted to your respective employments, according to the situations in which you are placed in the world. In this respect I cannot resist the pressing importunity which forces itself upon me, to compliment our northern brethren of this united kingdom, as generally more exemplary than their southern neighbours. We seldom see a North-Briton, who does not enjoy a competence in life, and who does not, according to his talents and education, commonly rise to affluence and prosperity. What is the reason? They form their conduct on such models as Dr. Blair has exhibited; they resist the temptations to amusements, which would interrupt industry; they comply with them sparingly, when their condition will admit of enjoying them, and they

Industry and Application.

they constantly restrain them within such limits, as neither to injure their health or their fortunes. May this example be held up as a pattern to the less considerate South-Britons !

CHAP. XX.

Industry and application.

DILIGENCE, industry, and proper improvement of time, are material duties of the young. To no purpose are they endowed with the best abilities, if they want activity for exerting them. Unavailing, in this case, will be every direction

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tion that can be given them, either for their temporal or spiritual welfare. In youth, the habits of industry are most easily acquired: in youth, the incentives to it are strongest, from ambition and from duty, from emulation and hope, from all the prospects, which the beginning of life affords. If, dead to these calls, you already languish in slothful inaction, what will be able to quicken the more sluggish current of advancing years? Industry is not only the instrument of improvement, but the foundation of pleasure. Nothing is so opposite to the true enjoyment of life, as the relaxed and feeble state of an indolent mind. He who is a stranger to industry

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try, may possess, but he cannot enjoy. For it is labour only which gives the relish to pleasure. It is the appointed vehicle of every good to man. It is the indispensable condition of our possessing a sound mind in a sound body. Sloth is so inconsistent with both, that it is hard to determine, whether it be a greater foe to virtue, or to health and happiness. Inactive as it is in itself, its effects are fatally powerful. Though it appear a slowly-flowing stream, yet it undermines all that is stable and flourishing. It not only saps the foundation of every virtue, but pours upon you a deluge of crimes and evils. It is like water which first putrifies by stagnation

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stagnation, and then sends up noxious vapours, and fills the atmosphere with death. Fly, therefore, from idleness, as the certain parent both of guilt and ruin. And under idleness I include, not mere inaction only, but all that circle of trifling occupations, in which too many saunter away their youth; perpetually engaged in frivolous society, or public amusements; in the labours of dress, or the ostentation of their persons.—Is this the foundation which you lay for future usefulness and esteem? By such accomplishments do you hope to recommend yourselves to the thinking part of the world, and to answer the expectations of your friends

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Industry and Application.

and your country?—Amusements youth requires: it were vain, it were cruel, to prohibit them. But, though allowable as the relaxation, they are most culpable as the business, of the young. For they then become the gulph of time, and the poison of the mind. They foment bad passions. They weaken the manly powers. They sink the native vigour of youth into contemptible effeminacy.

Vol. I. Sermon XI. page 305—307.

COROLLARY.—We have here another instance of Dr. Blair's knowledge of the world, and the true nature of man as a social being, as well as in his formation and constitution. Here we have none of that

Industry and Application.

that starched, supercilious pedantry, which formerly distinguished the teachers of that part of Great-Britian, and have since but too generally prevailed in the metropolis of this country, as well as in many of the towns and provinces of the southern part of the kingdom. Having stripped religion of its false and preposterous habiliments, which served as scare-crows to terrify youth from approaching it, the lovely and amiable dress in which this judicious teacher has represented it, surely can need only to be soberly considered, to be carefully followed and imitated.

The Employment of Time.

CHAP. XXI.

The employment of time.

REDEEMING your time from those dangerous wastes of it, which lead our youth into every disorder and confusion in society, seek to fill it, with employment which you may review with satisfaction. The acquisition of knowledge is one of the most honourable occupations of youth. The desire of it discovers a liberal mind, and is connected with many accomplishments and many virtues. But though your train of life should not lead you to study,
a course

The Employment of Time.

a course of education always furnishes proper employment to a well-disposed mind. Whatever you pursue, be emulous to excel. Generous ambition, and sensibility to praise, are, especially at your age, among the marks of virtue. Think not, that any affluence of fortune, or any elevation of rank, exempts you from the duties of application and industry. Industry is the law of our being; it is the demand of nature, of reason, and of God. Remember always, that the years which now pass over your heads, leave permanent memorials behind them. From your thoughtless minds they may escape; but they remain in the remembrance of God.

They

The Employment of Time.

They form an important part of the register of your life. They will hereafter bear testimony, either for or against you, at that day when, for all your actions, but particularly for the employments of youth, you must give an account to God. Whether your future course is destined to be long or short, after this manner it should commence; and, if it continue to be thus conducted, its conclusion, at what time soever it arrives, will not be inglorious or unhappy.

Vol. I. Sermon XI. page 307—309.

COROLLARY.—The value of time is seldom truly understood by giddy youth, until they perceive how difficult it is, to say

The Employment of Time.

the least, and frequently impossible, to retrieve the precious hours which they have so egregiously mis-spent. Happy will it be for them, if, while a small portion of it is still within their power, they feel the importance of recalling their actions, and by unceasing efforts, to double their diligence and assiduity in the paths of virtue and integrity. But, with the bare possibility of this seasonable recovery from the ways of vice, let it ever be remembered that thrice happier will they be who have paused at the first temptations to error, and stopped short of those practices, which must ever ensure confusion and discontent, and, if not prevented, an eternity of misery to their followers.

Dependance on the Blessing of Heaven.

CHAP. XXII.

*The necessity of depending for success on
the blessing of heaven.*

LET me finish the subject, with recalling your attention to that dependance on the blessing of Heaven, which, amidst all our endeavours after improvement, you ought continually to preserve. It is too common with the young, even when they resolve to tread the path of virtue and honour, to set out with presumptuous confidence in themselves. Trusting to their own abilities for carrying them successfully

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Dependance on the Blessing of Heaven.

through life, they are careless of applying to God, or of deriving any assistance from what they are apt to reckon the gloomy discipline of religion. Alas! how little do they know the dangers which await them! Neither human wisdom, nor human virtue, unsupported by religion, are equal to the trying situations which often occur in life. By the shock of temptation, how frequently have the most virtuous intentions been overthrown? Under the pressure of disaster, how often has the greatest constancy sunk? Destitute of the favour of God, you are in no better situation, with all your boasted abilities, than orphans left to wander in a trackless desert,

Dependance on the Blessing of Heaven.

desert, without any guide to conduct them, or any shelter to cover them from the gathering storm. Correct, then, this ill-founded arrogance. Expect not, that your happiness can be independent of him who made you. By faith and repentance, apply to the Redeemer of the world. By piety and prayer, seek the protection of the God of Heaven.

Vol. I. Sermon XI. page 309—310.

COROLLARY.—Dr. Blair has here described, in concise language, how much men are mistaken who discard the principles of religion. He has shewn that, without this as a sheet anchor, the frail bark of mankind will be in the utmost danger, from the numerous rocks and

Dependance on the Blessing of Heaven.

shoals, with which it is every where surrounded, in its voyage through the ocean of life. Youth, in particular run the utmost hazard of shipwreck, unless they are attentive to the necessary requisites, whereon they can form a rational expectation of a safe arrival at their destined port. With this prudent care, your success is certain; from the neglect of it, your ruin is inevitable.

END OF BOOK I.





Conduct on assuming Manhood.

BOOK II.

CHAP. I.

Unseasonable returns to the levity of youth to be laid aside on assuming the character of Manhood.

TO every thing, says the wise man, there is a season ; and a time to every purpose under heaven.- As there are duties which belong to particular situations of fortune, so there are duties also which result from particular periods of human life. Having treated of the virtues

Conduct on assuming Manhood.

virtues which adorn youth, I now call your attention to those duties which respect manhood. I begin with observing, that the first duty of those who are become men is, *to put away childish things*. The season of youthful levities, follies, and passions, is now over.— These have had their reign; a reign perhaps too long; and to which a termination is certainly proper at last. Much indulgence is due to youth. Many things admit of excuse then, which afterwards become unpardonable. Some things may even be graceful in youth, which, if not criminal, are at least ridiculous, in persons of maturer years. It is a great trial of wisdom to

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Conduct on assuming Manhood.

to make our retreat from youth with propriety; to assume the character of manhood, without exposing ourselves to reproach, by an unseasonable remainder of juvenility, on the one hand, or by precise and disgusting formality, on the other. Nature has placed certain boundaries, by which she discriminates the pleasures, actions, and employments, that are suited to the different stages of human life. It becomes us, neither to overleap these boundaries, by a transition too hasty and violent; nor to hover too long on one side of the limit, when nature calls us to pass over to the other.

There

Conduct on assuming Manhood.

There are particularly two things in which middle age should preserve its distinction and separation from youth ; these are, levities of behaviour, and intemperate indulgence of pleasure. The gay spirits of the young often prompt an inconsiderate degree of levity, sometimes amusing, sometimes offensive ; but for which, though betraying them occasionally into serious dangers, their want of experience may plead some excuse. A more composed and manly behaviour is expected in riper years. The affectation of youthful vanities, degrades the dignity of manhood ; even renders its manners less agreeable ; and, by awkward attempts to please, produces contempt

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tempt. Cheerfulness is becoming in every age. But the proper cheerfulness of a man is as different from the levity of a boy, as the flight of the eagle is from the fluttering of a sparrow in the air.

As all unseasonable returns to the levity of youth ought to be laid aside,—an admonition which equally belongs to both the sexes,—still more are we to guard against the intemperate indulgences of pleasure, to which the young are unhappily prone. From these we cannot too soon retreat. They open the path to ruin, in every period of our days. As long, however, as these excesses are confined to the first stage of
life,

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life, hope is left, that when this fever of the spirits shall abate, sobriety may gain the ascendant, and wiser counsels have power to influence conduct. But after the season of youth is past, if its intemperate spirit remains; if, instead of listening to the calls of honour, and bending attention to the cares and the business of men, the same course of idleness and sensuality continues to be pursued, the case becomes more desperate. A sad presumption arises, that long immaturity is to prevail; and that the pleasures and passions of the youth are to sink and overwhelm the man. Difficult, I confess, it may prove to overcome the attachments, which youthful

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ful habits had for a long while been forming. Hard, at the beginning, is the task, to impose on our conduct restraints, which are altogether unaccustomed and new. But this is a trial which every one must undergo, in entering on new scenes of action, and new periods of life. Let those who are in this situation bethink themselves, that all is now at stake. Their character and honour, their future fortune and success in the world, depend in a great measure on the steps they take, when first they appear on the stage of active life. The world then looks to them with an observing eye. It studies their behaviour; and interprets all their motions,

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motions, as presages of the line of future conduct which they mean to hold. Now, therefore, *put away childish things*; dismiss your former trifling amusements, and youthful pleasures; blast not the hopes which your friends are willing to conceive of you. Higher occupations, more serious cares, await you.

Vol. III. Sermon IV. page 61—67.

COROLLARY.—Dr. Blair now calls upon his youthful auditors, to consider seriously the practices most suitable and fitted to their age, and, whilst, in other respects, they wish to be considered as men, not to overlook those principles and those sentiments, which, with a correspondent conduct

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duct in life, can alone make them so. It is not the number of years they have lived, since they were ushered into the present state of probation, that will give them this character; but the behaviour they exhibit is that which must mark their title to whatever is laudable and praise-worthy. If, then, you think yourselves to be men, be careful to act accordingly; be careful to perform the relative duties of life, in the sphere which providence has allotted you. In a word, be grateful, be just, be honourable.

The Importance of Industry and Activity.

CHAP. II.

*The importance of industry and activity in
the middle age.*

THOSE who are in the middle period of life, are come forward to that field of action, where they are to mix in all the stir and bustle of the world; where all the human powers are brought forth into full exercise; where all that is conceived to be important in human affairs, is incessantly going on around them. The time of youth was the preparation for future action. In old age our active part is supposed to be finished, and rest is permitted. Middle age
is

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is the season, when we are expected to display the fruits, which education had prepared and ripened. In this world, all of us were formed to be assistants to one another. The wants of society call for every man's labour, and require various departments to be filled up. They require that some be appointed to rule, and others to obey; some, to defend the society from danger, others to maintain its internal order and peace; some, to provide the conveniences of life, others to promote the improvement of the mind; many, to work; others to contrive and direct. In short, within the sphere of society there is employment for every one; and, in the course

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of these employments, many a moral duty is to be performed ; many a religious grace to be exercised. No one is permitted to be a mere blank in the world. No rank, nor station, nor dignity of birth, nor extent of possessions, exempt any man from contributing his share to public utility and good. This is the precept of God. This is the voice of nature. This is the just demand of the human race upon one another.

One of the first questions, therefore, which every man who is in the vigour of his age should put to himself is,—
“ What am I doing in this world ?
“ What have I yet done, whereby I may
“ glorify God, and be useful to my
“ fellows ?

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“ fellows? Do I properly fill up the
“ place which belongs to my rank and
“ station? Will any memorial remain
“ of my having existed on the earth?
“ or are my days passing fruitless a-
“ way, now when I might be of some
“ importance in the system of human
“ affairs?”—Let not any man imagine
that he is of no importance, and has,
upon that account, a privilege to trifle
with his days at pleasure. *Talents* have
been given to all; to some, *ten*; to others,
five; to others, *two*. *Occupy with these*
till I come, is the command of the great
Master to all. Where superior abili-
ties are possessed, or distinguished ad-
vantages of fortune are enjoyed, a wider
range

The Importance of Industry and Activity.

ranged is afforded for useful exertion, and the world is intitled to expect it. But among those who fill up the inferior departments of society, though the sphere of usefulness be more contracted, no one is left entirely insignificant. Let us remember, that, in all stations and conditions, the important relations take place, of masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and friends, citizens and subjects. The discharge of the duties arising from those various relations, forms a great portion of the work assigned to the middle age of man. Though the part we have to act may be confined within a humble line, yet; if it be honourably
acted,

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acted, it will be always found to carry its own reward.

In fine, industry, in all its virtuous forms, ought to inspire and invigorate manhood. This will add to it both satisfaction and dignity; will make the current of our years, as they roll, flow along in a clear and equable stream, without the putrid stagnation of sloth and idleness. Idleness is the great corrupter of youth; and the bane and dishonour of middle age. He who, in the prime of life, finds time to hang heavy on his hands, may with much reason suspect, that he has not consulted the duties, which the consideration of his age

The Importance of Industry and Activity.

imposed upon him; assuredly he has not consulted his own happiness.

Vol. II. Sermon IV. page 67—70.

COROLLARY.—If any thing could be wanting to enforce the great importance of industry, and a careful cultivation of our faculties and talents, we need only to contemplate the miseries of indolence, and the numerous vices to which want of employment, or inattention to business, of some kind or other, must constantly expose men. The talents which are respectively committed to us, we are required to improve. The faculties which the Almighty has bestowed upon us, we are called upon to exercise. Idleness, therefore, was never intended for man. Society has a claim upon him to discharge the duties

The Dangers which attend Middle Age.

duties of his station ; and he who is inattentive to these is a nuisance to it, and frequently a locusts. In action only can we fulfil our part ; and by action only can we ever hope to establish our reputation in this life, or prepare ourselves for another.

CHAP. III.

The dangers which attend the period of middle age.

BUT amidst all the bustle of the world, let us not forget to guard with vigilance against the peculiar dangers which attend the period of middle life. It is much to be regretted, that in the
present

The Dangers which attend Middle Age.

present state of things there is no period of man's age in which his virtue is not exposed to perils. Pleasure lays its snares for youth : and after the season of youthful follies is past, other temptations, no less formidable to virtue, presently arise. The love of pleasure is succeeded by the passion for interest. In this passion the whole mind is too often absorbed ; and the change thereby induced on the character is of no amiable kind. Amidst the excesses of youth, virtuous affections often remain. The attachments of friendship, the love of honour, and the warmth of sensibility, give a degree of lustre to the character, and cover many a failing. But
interest,

The Dangers which attend Middle Age.

interest, when it is become the ruling principle, both debases the mind, and hardens the heart. It deadens the feeling of every thing that is sublime or refined. It contracts the affections within a narrow circle; and extinguishes all those sparks of generosity and tenderness which once glowed in the breast.

In proportion as worldly pursuits multiply, and competitions rise, ambition, jealousy, and envy, combine with interest to excite bad passions, and to increase the corruption of the heart. At first, perhaps, it was a man's intention to advance himself in the world by none but fair and laudable methods. He retained for some time an aversion
to

The Dangers which attend Middle Age.

to whatever appeared dishonourable. But here, he is encountered by the violence of an enemy. There, he is supplanted by the address of a rival. The pride of a superior insults him. The ingratitude of a friend provokes him. Animositics ruffle his temper. Suspicions poison his mind. He finds, or imagines that he finds, the artful and designing surrounding him on every hand. He views corruption and iniquity prevailing; the modest neglected; the forward and the crafty rising to distinction. Too easily, from the example of others, he learns that mystery of vice, called the way of the world. What he has learned he fancies necessary

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sary to practise for his own defence; and of course assumes that supple and versatile character, which he observes to be frequent, and which often has appeared to him successful.

To these, and many more dangers of the same kind, is the man exposed who is deeply engaged in active life. No small degree of firmness in religious principle, and of constancy in virtue, is requisite, in order to prevent his being assimilated to the spirit of the world, and carried away by the *multitude of evil doers*. Let him therefore call to mind those principles which ought to fortify him against such temptations to vice. Let him often recollect that,
whatever

The Dangers which attend Middle Age.

whatever his station in life may be, he is a man; he is a Christian. These are the chief characters which he has to support; characters superior far, if they be supported with dignity, to any of the titles with which courts can decorate him; superior to all that can be acquired in the strife of a busy world. Let him think, that though it may be desirable to increase his opulence, or to advance his rank, yet what he ought to hold much more sacred is, to maintain his integrity and honour. If these be forfeited, wealth or station will have few charms left. They will not be able to protect him long from sinking into contempt in the eye of an observing world.

The Dangers which attend Middle Age.

world. Even to his own eye he will at last appear base and wretched.—Let not, then, the affairs of the world entirely ingross his time and thoughts. From that contagious air which he breathes in the midst of it, let him sometimes retreat into the salutary shade, consecrated to devotion and to wisdom. There, conversing seriously with his own soul, and looking up to the Father of spirits, let him study to calm those unquiet passions, and to rectify those internal disorders, which intercourse with the world had excited and increased.

Vol. III. Sermon IV. page 70—74.

COROLLARY.

The Dangers which attend Middle Age.

COROLLARY.—If youth has been exposed to numerous dangers, in its transition from boyish years towards the verge of maturer age, the entrance upon that stage of life is no less replete with hazards and temptations. Dr. Blair has enumerated so many of these, that we have the less occasion to enlarge in our observations upon them. Without the aid of religion, properly and rightly understood, it appears to be almost impossible for men to escape them, whatever situations of life they may occupy; whereas, by a due attention to this, all the grounds for apprehension are removed, and a foundation for a comfortable passage through life established and ensured.

Experience to be anticipated by Reflection.

CHAP. IV.

Experience to be anticipated by reflection.

IT is to be observed, that the young and the ignorant are always the most violent in pursuit. The knowledge which is forced upon them by longer acquaintance with the world, moderates their impetuosity. Study then to anticipate, by reflection, that knowledge which experience often purchases at too dear a price. Inure yourselves to frequent consideration of the emptiness of those pleasures which excite so much strife and commotion among mankind.

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Think

Experience to be anticipated by Reflection.

Think how much more of the true enjoyment is lost by the violence of passions than by the want of those things which give occasion to that passion. Persuade yourselves, that the favour of God, and the possession of virtue, form the chief happiness of the rational nature. Let a contented mind, and a peaceful life, hold the next place in your estimation. These are the conclusions which the wise and thinking part of mankind have always formed. To these conclusions, after having run the race of passion, you will probably come at the last. By forming them betimes, you will make a seasonable escape from that tempestuous region,

through

Experience to be anticipated by Reflection.

through which none can pass without suffering misery, contracting guilt, and undergoing severe remorse.

Vol. II. Sermon III. page 56, 57.

COROLLARY.—The very seasonable advice which is here given to youth, cannot be too minutely or too attentively considered. It discovers the cause of most of the levities and indiscretions of the young, and points to the dangers which must be the consequence of rushing into practices, of which in maturer years they will discover the impropriety and mischief. It directs them to nobler views. It endeavours to shew them the imprudence of rashness and unbridled impetuosity. It glances at the dangerous tendency of the human passions; and wishes

The Beginnings of Passion to be opposed.

to prevent the necessity of that repentance, without which every calamity, naturally resulting from their unrestrained exercise, must evidently follow. To “oppose the beginnings of passion,” therefore, as Dr. Blair observes, is of the greatest importance.

CHAP. V.

The beginnings of passion to be opposed.

OPPOSE early the beginnings of passion. Avoid particularly all such objects as are apt to excite passions which you know to predominate within you.

The Beginnings of Passion to be opposed.

you. As soon as you find the tempest rising, have recourse to every proper method, either of allaying its violence, or escaping to a calmer shore. Hasten to call up emotions of an opposite nature. Study to conquer one passion by means of some other which is of less dangerous tendency. Never account any thing small or trivial which is in hazard of introducing disorder into your heart. Never make light of any desire which you feel gaining such progress as to threaten entire dominion.— Blandishing it will appear at the first. As a gentle and innocent emotion, it may steal into the heart; but as it advances, is likely to pierce you through

The Beginnings of Passion to be opposed.

with many sorrows. What you indulged as a favourite amusement, will shortly become a serious business, and in the end may prove the burden of your life. Most of our passions flatter us in their rise, but their beginnings are treacherous; their growth is imperceptible; and the evils which they carry in their train, lie concealed, until their dominion is established. What Solomon says of one of them, holds true of them all, “that their beginning” is as “when one letteth out water.”—It issues from a small chink, which once might have been easily stopped; but, being neglected, it is soon widened by the stream, till the bank is at last totally

totally thrown down, and the flood is at liberty to deluge the whole plain.

Vol. II. Sermon III. page 61, 62.

COROLLARY.—In this little chapter, Dr. Blair has more immediately adverted to the dangerous tendency of indulging the human passions. Most of our passions may be useful, if we will but endeavour to render them beneficial to us; but if they are not kept within their proper bounds, and if any one is permitted to predominate over the rest, and to supercede the due exercise of reason, confusion and disorder must inevitably follow. Advice is never more necessary than on the commencement of the state of manhood; and yet unthinking youth, in no part of life, are more prone to reject the most salu-

Desire of Praise.

tary counsels, and to disregard, perhaps despise, those who are desirous of imparting the most wholesome admonitions.

CHAP. VI.

The desire of praise subservient to many valuable purposes.

TO a variety of good purposes the desire of praise is subservient, and on many occasions co-operates with the principle of virtue. It awakens us from sloth, invigorates activity, and stimulates our efforts to excel. It has given rise to most of the splendid, and to many of the useful enterprises of men.

It

Desire of Praise.

It has animated the patriot, and fired the hero. Magnanimity, generosity, and fortitude, are what all mankind admire. Hence, such as were actuated by the desire of extensive fame, have been prompted to deeds which either participated of the spirit, or at least carried the appearance, of distinguished virtue. The desire of praise is generally connected with all the finer sensibilities of human nature. It affords a ground on which exhortation, counsel, and reproof can work a proper effect. Whereas, to be entirely destitute of this passion betokens an ignoble mind, on which no moral impression is easily made. Where there is no desire of
praise,

Desire of Praise.

praise, there will be also no sense of reproach; and if that be extinguished, one of the principal guards of virtue is removed, and the mind thrown open to many opprobrious pursuits. He whose countenance never glowed with shame, and whose heart never beat at the sound of praise, is not destined for any honourable distinction; is likely to grovel in the sordid quest of gain; or to slumber life away in the indolence of selfish pleasures.

Abstracted from the sentiments which are connected with it as a principle of action, the esteem of our fellow-creatures is an object which, on account of the advantages it brings, may be lawfully

Desire of Praise.

fully pursued. It is necessary to our success in every fair and honest undertaking. Not only our private interest, but our public usefulness, depends in a great measure upon it. The sphere of our influence is contracted or enlarged, in proportion to the degree in which we enjoy the good opinion of the public. Men listen with an unwilling ear to one whom they do not honour; while a respected character adds weight to example, and authority to counsel. To desire the esteem of others, for the sake of its effects, is not only allowable, but in many cases is our duty: and to be totally indifferent to praise or censure is

Desire of Praise.

so far from being a virtue, that it is really a defect in character.

Vol. II. Sermon IV. page 141—143.

COROLLARY.—Does not all mankind act upon this principle? The enthusiast, no less than the man of sober mind, is equally captivated by it. It is the idea of conferring benefit to our fellow-creatures, with reference to a future life, that forms the spring of action to direct and influence our conduct? In hesitating upon the affirmative to this question, we must feel considerable doubt and anxiety. The desire of praise; the ambition of being deemed superior to the rest of the world; the wish to establish an opinion of superior abilities in the estimation of mankind; all these concur to push forward
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Order essential to Self-Enjoyment.

the enthusiast, and all unite their efforts to encourage a propensity to praise. When prudently used, the love of it will prove a salutary stimulus; when misplaced, it will be productive of mischief.

CHAP. VII.

Order essential to self-enjoyment and felicity.

CONSIDER also how important it is to your self-enjoyment and felicity. Order is the source of peace; and peace is the highest of all temporal blessings. Order is indeed the only region in which tranquillity dwells. The very mention
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Order essential to Self-Enjoyment.

of confusion imports disturbance and vexation. Is it possible for that man to be happy, who cannot look into the state of his affairs, or the tenor of his conduct, without discerning all to be embroiled? who is either in the midst of remorse for what he has neglected to do, or in the midst of hurry to overtake what he finds, too late, was necessary to have been done? Such as live according to order, may be compared to the celestial bodies, which move in regular courses, and by stated laws; whose influence is beneficent; whose operations are quiet and tranquil. The disorderly resemble those tumultuous elements on earth, which, by sudden and violent

Order essential to Self-Enjoyment.

violent irruptions, disturb the course of nature. By mismanagement of affairs, by excess in expence, by irregularity in the indulgence of company and amusement, they are perpetually creating molestation both to themselves and others. They depart from their road to seek pleasure; and, instead of it, they every where raise up sorrows. Being always found out of their proper place, they of course interfere and jar with others. The disorders which they raise never fail to spread beycnd their own line, and to involve many in confusion and distress; whence they necessarily become the authors of tumult and contention, discord and enmity. Whereas
order

Order essential to Self-Enjoyment.

order is the foundation of union. It allows every man to carry on his own affairs, without disturbing his neighbour. It is the golden chain, which holds together the societies of men in friendship and peace.

Vol. II. Sermon I. page 23—25.

COROLLARY.—It was the advice of one who knew human nature well, that “all things should be done decently, and in order.” It is not only necessary to be attentive to this in religious discipline, but in all the social relations of life. It is no less necessary to individuals, in whatever condition they may be placed. The happiness of mankind is essentially promoted by it; and without it, the possibility of
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Bad Effects of Pride.

any tolerable satisfaction in our proceedings, is at least highly questionable. The man of method apportions his time duly, and, though never in a hurry, performs much in little space; whilst he who disregards it, is ever in confusion, and scarcely can proceed at all in business, never with satisfaction.

CHAP. VIII.

Bad effects of pride.

LET me advise you to view your character with an impartial eye; and to learn, from your own failings, to give that indulgence which in your turn you claim. It is pride which fills the

Bad Effects of Pride.

world with so much harshness and severity. In the fulness of self-estimation, we forget what we are; we claim attentions, to which we are not entitled. We are rigorous to offences, as if we had never offended; unfeeling to distress, as if we knew not what it was to suffer. From those airy regions of pride and folly, let us descend to our proper level. Let us survey the natural equality on which Providence has placed man with man, and reflect on the infirmities common to all. If the reflection on natural equality and mutual offences be insufficient to prompt humanity, let us at least consider what we are in the sight of God. Have we
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Bad Effects of Pride.

none of that forbearance to give one another, which we all so earnestly entreat from Heaven? Can we look for clemency or gentleness from our Judge, when we are so backward to shew it to our own brethren?

Vol. I. Sermon VI. page 154, 155.

COROLLARY.—A proud and domineering spirit is, on all occasions, the bane of society. If in some respects we differ from one another, in others we are so nearly on a footing, that there is little cause for exercising a spirit of self-sufficiency, or considering ourselves a superior race of mortals to those in stations of an inferior nature. What have we in this life, which we do not receive at the

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hands

On preparing for Old Age.

hands of God? Or who but he maketh us to differ from one another? In our nature we are the same; in society we are necessarily unequal for a time, until the grave levels all distinctions, and the prince and the peasant will be alike respected.

CHAP. IX.

On preparing for old age.

WHILE we thus study to correct the errors, and to provide against the dangers, which are peculiar to this stage of life, let us also lay foundation for comfort in old age. That is a period which all expect and hope to see; and

On preparing for Old Age.

and to which, amidst the toils of the world, men sometimes look forward, not without satisfaction, as to the period of retreat and rest. But let them not deceive themselves. A joyless and dreary season it will prove, if they arrive at it with an unimproved, or corrupted mind. For old age, as for every other thing, a certain preparation is requisite; and that preparation consists chiefly in three particulars; in the acquisition of knowledge of friends, of virtue. There is an acquisition of another kind, of which it is altogether needless for me to give any recommendation, that of riches. But though this by many, will be esteemed a more

On preparing for Old Age.

material acquisition than all the three I have named, it may be confidently pronounced, that, without these other requisites, all the wealth we can lay up in store will prove insufficient for making our latter days pass smoothly away.

First, He who wishes to render his old age comfortable, should study betimes to enlarge and improve his mind; and, by thought and inquiry, by reading and reflecting, to acquire a taste for useful knowledge. This will provide for him a great and noble entertainment, when other entertainments leave him. If he bring into the solitary retreat of age a vacant, uninformed mind, where no knowledge dawns, where no ideas

On preparing for Old Age.

ideas rise, which has nothing to feed upon within itself, many a heavy and comfortless day he must necessarily pass.—Next, When a man declines into the vale of years, he depends more on the aid of his friends, than in any other period of his life. Then is the time, when he would especially wish to find himself surrounded by some who love and respect him; who will bear with his infirmities, relieve him of his labours, and cheer him with their society. Let him, therefore, now, in the summer of his days, while yet active and flourishing, by acts of seasonable kindness and beneficence, ensure that love, and by upright and honour-

On preparing for Old Age.

able conduct lay foundation for that respect, which in old age he would wish to enjoy.—In the last place, Let him consider a good conscience, peace with God, and the hope of heaven, as the most effectual consolations he can possess, when the *evil days* shall come, wherein, otherwise, he is likely to find little pleasure. It is not merely by transient acts of devotion, that such consolations are to be provided. The regular tenor of a virtuous and pious life, spent in the faithful discharge of all the duties of our station, will prove the best preparation for old age, for death and immortality.

Vol. III. Sermon IV. page 77—79.

COROLLARY.

On preparing for Old Age.

COROLLARY.—To all who are not hardened by infidelity and atheism, against every consideration of a future state, it is impossible to consider the termination of life with indifference. Men who will suffer themselves to think at all, and exercise the faculties which God and nature have given them, cannot but be convinced, that young as well as old are liable to death; and be assured, that if men escape the accidents of early life, and survive the dangers of maturer years, the season of old age is that which leaves no room for doubt of the propriety and necessity of making suitable provision for that state and condition which is to succeed the present.

Importance of religious Knowledge.

CHAP. X.

Importance of religious knowledge.

BEFORE I conclude, let me endeavour to impress on your minds a high sense of the importance of religious views, and of the consolations they afford. Without the belief and hope afforded by divine revelation, the circumstances of man are extremely forlorn. He finds himself placed here as a stranger in a vast universe, where the powers and operations of nature are very imperfectly known; where both the beginnings and the issues of things are
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Importance of religious Knowledge.

involved in mysterious darkness ; where he is unable to discover with any certainty, whence he sprung, or for what purpose he was brought into this state of existence ; whether he be subjected to the government of a mild, or of a wrathful ruler ; what construction he is to put on many of the dispensations of his providence ; and what his own fate is to be when he departs hence. What a disconsolate situation to a serious inquiring mind ! The greater degree of virtue it possesses, its sensibility is likely to be more oppressed by this burden of labouring thought. Even though it were in one's power to banish all uneasy thought, and to fill up the hours of
life

Importance of religious Knowledge.

life with perpetual amusement; life so filled up would, upon reflection, appear poor and trivial. But these are far from being the terms upon which man is brought into this world. He is conscious that his being is frail and feeble; he sees himself beset with various dangers, and is exposed to many a melancholy apprehension, from the evils which he may have to encounter, before he arrives at the close of life. In this distressed condition, to reveal to him such discoveries of the Supreme Being as the Christian religion affords, is to reveal to him a father and a friend; is to let in a ray of the most cheering light upon the darkness of the human estate.

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estate. He who was before a destitute orphan, wandering in the inhospitable desert, has now gained a shelter from the bitter and inclement blast. He now knows to whom to pray, and in whom to trust; where to unbosom his sorrows; and from what hand to look for relief.

It is certain, that when the heart bleeds from some wound of recent misfortune, nothing is of equal efficacy with religious comfort. It is of power to enlighten the darkest hour, and to assuage the severest of woe, by the belief of divine favour, and the prospect of a blessed immortality. In such hopes the mind expatiates with joy; and when bereaved

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reaved of its earthly friends, solaces itself with the thoughts of one friend who will never forsake it. Refined reasonings, concerning the nature of the human condition, and the improvement which philosophy teaches us to make of every event, may entertain the mind when it is at ease; may, perhaps, contribute to soothe it, when slightly touched with sorrow; but when it is torn with any sore distress, they are cold and feeble, compared with a direct promise from the word of God. This is an anchor to the soul, both sure and stedfast. This has given consolation and refuge to many a virtuous heart, at a time when

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Importance of religious Knowledge.

the most cogent reasonings would have proved utterly unavailing.

Upon the approach of death especially, when, if a man thinks at all, his anxiety about his future interests must naturally increase, the power of religious consolation is sensibly felt. Then appears, in the most striking light, the high value of the discoveries made by the Gospel; not only life and immortality revealed, but a Mediator with God discovered; mercy proclaimed, through him, to the frailties of the penitent and the humble; and his presence promised to be with them when they are passing through the valley of the shadow of death, in order to bring them
safe

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safe into unseen habitations of rest and joy. Here is ground for their leaving the world with comfort and peace. But in this severe and trying period, this labouring hour of nature, how shall the unhappy man support himself, who knows not, or believes not, the hope of religion? Secretly conscious to himself, that he has not acted his part as he ought to have done, the sins of his past life arise before him in sad remembrance. He wishes to exist after death, and yet dreads that existence. The Governor of the world is unknown. He cannot tell whether every endeavour to obtain his mercy may not be in vain. All is awful obscurity around him; and

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Importance of religious Knowledge.

in the midst of endless doubts and perplexities, the trembling reluctant soul is forced away from the body. As the misfortunes of life must, to such a man, have been most oppressive; so its end is bitter: his sun sets in a dark cloud; and the night of death closes over his head, full of misery.

Vol. II. Sermon XV. page 413—417.

COROLLARY.—If it were possible to doubt the necessity of pursuing the paths of virtue, and of complying with the precepts of religion, the reflections of the dying man would be sufficient to demonstrate its importance. Dr. Blair has here very faithfully delineated the operations of the human mind at that critical æra;

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The Conclusion

to which no person can be a stranger, who has ever witnessed the scenes of a sick bed, or visited the afflicted spirits of the worldly-minded on the approach of their departure from the present state of existence. How different the condition of the pious servant of God! All calmness—all composure—all satisfaction—all hope—and all resignation.

CHAP. XI.

The Conclusion.

PROM the whole of what has been said, this important instruction arises, that the happiness of every man depends more upon the state of his own mind,
than

The Conclusion.

than upon any one external circumstance; nay, more than all external things put together. We have seen, that inordinate passions are the great disturbers of life; and that unless we possess a good conscience, and a well-governed mind, discontent will blast every enjoyment, and the highest prosperity will prove only disguised misery. Fix then this conclusion in your minds, that the destruction of your virtue is the destruction of your peace. Keep thy heart with all diligence; govern it with the greatest care; for out of it are the issues of life. In no station, in no period, think yourselves secure from the dangers which spring from
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The Conclusion.

your passions. Every age, and every station, they beset; from youth to grey hairs, and from the peasant to the prince.

Vol. I. Sermon VII. page 183.

COROLLARY.—The inference which we are to draw from the whole of what is contained in this compendium, may be briefly summed up in the words of Solomon; who, after having followed a round of pleasure, with every means of indulgence of the passions, concludes with the advice—“Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man.”

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