THE

GUILT, FOLLY, AND SOURCES

OF

SUICIDE:

TWO DISCOURSES,

PREACHED IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK,

FEBRUARY, 1805.

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DISCOURSES

ON

SUICIDE.

TO THE

YOUNG PERSONS

UNDER THE AUTHOR'S PASTORAL CARE.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

FROM the moment of my consenting to publish the following Discourses, I resolved to inscribe them to You. In doing this, it is my aim, not to conciliate your attachment by flattery, nor, by warm professions, to proclaim my own fidelity as your Pastor; but to gain a larger share of your attention to a subject which appears to me worthy of your most serious consideration.

If it be true, as I, with others, have expressed a belief, that the young are most apt to fall into the crime of suicide, it is obvious that these Discourses, though intended to have a general application, are especially applicable to You. It is certain, that in preparing them for the pulpit, and afterwards for the press, the idea that they might, in some degree, promote your welfare, was the object more particularly in my view,—the hope which I most fondly cherished.

There is little prospect of success, on the principle of human probability, in addressing those who have become inveterate in corrupt habits; or whose minds are already prepared for the last act of violence which a despairing mortal can commit. But to admonish the young; to instruct the inexperienced; to warn those who are entering on the stage of life, against the errors, the excesses, the false hopes, and the numberless delusions to which they are exposed; and to endeavour to imbue with sentiments of virtue and piety those whose character and habits are yet imperfectly formed; as they are among the most important, so they are also among the most encouraging parts of our pastoral duty. If, in these respects, the following pages should be found, even in a single instance, productive of good, I shall consider myself as richly rewarded.

That you may *escape the pollutions* which surround and assail you; that you may prove the comfort of your Parents, the ornament of the Church, and the benefactors of Society; that you may be inspired with that heavenly Wisdom which *hath length of days in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour;* and that you may, finally, through the power and grace of the REDEEMER, be prepared to live and reign with Him for ever;—these, my dear young Friends, are the cordial wishes, the unceasing prayers of

Your affectionate Pastor,

SAMUEL MILLER.

New-York, March 1, 1805.

DISCOURSE I.

JOB ii. 9, 10.

THEN SAID HIS WIFE UNTO HIM, DOST THOU STILL RETAIN THINE INTEGRITY? CURSE GOD, AND DIE. BUT HE SAID UNTO HER, THOU SPEAKEST AS ONE OF THE FOOLISH WOMEN SPEAKETH. WHAT! SHALL WE RECEIVE GOOD AT THE HAND OF GOD, AND SHALL WE NOT RECEIVE EVIL?

JOB, in the days of his prosperity, was *the greatest of all the men of the east.* His immense wealth placed him in a high station, and gave him an extensive and commanding influence. His disinterested and liberal charity endeared him to every friend of human happiness. His wisdom and piety excited the admiration, and rendered him the oracle, of his countrymen: and surrounded by affectionate and dutiful children, he seems to have possessed, in a large measure, every requisite for earthly enjoyment. *When the eye saw him, then it blessed him, and when the ear heard him it gave witness unto him. Because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. When the young men saw him they hid themselves, and the aged arose and stood up. In his presence* *princes refrained from talking, and the nobles held their peace. He chose out their way, he sat as chief, and dwelt as a king among them.*

How long he was permitted to enjoy this prosperity, the sacred historian has not informed us. But in process of time it pleased the Sovereign Disposer to lay him low in adversity. He was deprived of his possessions by a variety of disastrous occurrences. His sons and his daughters, in the midst of festive enjoyment, were all cut off at a single stroke. The honours which, in his prosperity, a selfish and deceitful world had heaped upon him, were now withdrawn. And to complete his wretchedness, the venerable man himself was smitten with a tormenting and loathsome disease. Sudden and melancholy reverse! Lately rolling in princely affluence; now a beggar. In the morning greeted by a numerous and happy offspring; in the evening childless. A few hours since blessed with vigorous health; now tortured and disfigured by a disease which renders life a burden. Once followed, and even loaded with testimonies of public respect; now almost universally neglected, and *had in derision by those whose fathers he would have disdained to have set with the dogs of his flock.*

In the day of affliction, to have an enlightened, affectionate, and pious friend, capable of soothing our pains and beguiling our sorrows; especially to have the companion of our bosom, that *friend that sticketh closer than a brother*, of this character, is an inestimable blessing. Many a man, by the tender endearments, and prudent counsel of a faithful wife, has been guarded from important mistakes, and even snatched from destruction. But the wife of this afflicted saint was of a very different character. Instead of the soother and lightener of his woes, she becomes his tormenter. Instead of pointing him to the proper sources of consolation, she tempts him to despair and death. How destitute at once of the softness of her sex, the affection of a companion, and the decorum, to say nothing of the purity of virtue, must that woman have been, who could approach her husband, already overwhelmed by sorrow, with such language as this, "*Dost thou still retain thine integrity?* Wilt thou still serve a master, who, in return for all thy faithfulness, has treated thee so unkindly? *Curse God, and die.** Set at defiance that power which has now done its worst. Live no longer in

* The word here translated *curse*, literally signifies to *bless*; but it is evidently one of those cases in which, by a strong figure, the direct contrary of the literal meaning is intended. The same figure is frequently employed, in ironical conversation, to the present day. "He *blessed* me," or "he poured *blessings* upon me," is a mode of expression often used to signify the *bitterest imprecations*. "Sometimes this word," says the learned TAYLOR, "means to *blaspheme*, to *curse*; not from its natural force, but because pious persons of old accounted blasphemy so abominable, that they abhorred to express it by its proper name; and, therefore, by an *Euphemismus*, or decent manner of speaking, instead of *curse God*, said, *bless God*. SCHULTENS observes, that to *bless* is sometimes the same as to *bid farewell*; and, therefore, as 'tis usual to *bid farewell* to what we reject, disregard, or have done with, to *bless* may signify to *disregard*, to *take no notice of*." See TAYLOR's *Hebrew Concordance*. The same word is used in 1 *Kings* xxi. 10, and also in *Job* i. 11, and ii. 5; in all which passages it signifies, beyond controversy, to *curse*. Our translators have, therefore, with great judgment, given the precise meaning of the sacred text.

dependence upon him who has loaded thee with miseries. Be thine own deliverer. Take refuge in a voluntary death from a world which offers thee nothing but evil."

Here appears to be a direct and explicit proposal of suicide.* And if ever there was a man who might either wisely or innocently have resorted to this mode of terminating his sufferings, perhaps *Job* was that man. The most abject poverty stared him in the face. The negligence and the derision of his former acquaintance must have made him almost willing to fly for ever from the sight of man. The strongest ties which bound him to the world had been broken in the loss of his property, and in the death of his children. A distressing, and apparently incurable disease rendered all future enjoyment of life hopeless: and the only near relative which a bereaving Providence had left him, was a grief instead of a comfort. Many a modern infidel would, no doubt, pronounce these circumstances an abundant justification of suicide, and would readily join this woman in her wicked proposal, *Curse God, and die.* But Job *feared*

* It has been doubted by many judicious expositors, whether this proposal were really to commit suicide. Some have rather supposed the meaning of the suggestion to be, that, by a blasphemous renunciation of God, and his service, he should provoke God to take away his life. The author, though rather inclined to prefer that interpretation of the passage which he has given above, yet considers this as equally adapted to his design. It even fortifies his argument. For if *Job* abhorred the thought of provoking God to destroy his life, much more would he have abhorred the thought of becoming his own executioner.

God, and eschewed evil. He had the magnanimity of a man, and the fortitude of a believer. He, therefore, firmly and indignantly replied, *Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*

It is my design, from this passage, to offer some remarks on the crime of SUICIDE—a crime of the deepest dye—a crime which has become alarmingly frequent in our land, and in our city*—a crime, therefore, against which it becomes those who would *declare the whole counsel of God* to bear public and solemn testimony.

By *Suicide* is meant, not merely self-murder by immediate violence, but also the destruction of our own life by wanton exposure to violence from others, or by any indirect means. The *duellist* is guilty of this crime. He who commits a felony with the express view of being put to death by the hand of public justice, is also guilty of it; and, in general, every one who, voluntarily and without necessity, places himself in the way of danger. There are occasions, indeed, on which it is the duty of men to put their lives in jeopardy, and even resolutely to sacrifice them. The case of *martyrdom* is one instance of such duty, and the case of *just and necessary*

* It is believed, that within the three months immediately preceding the delivery of these discourses, at least *nine* cases of Suicide occurred in the city of New-York. This number, in a city, the population of which does not exceed 70,000, must be considered as enormous and alarming.

war is another. But it is possible, in either of these cases, to court death foolishly and wickedly. We are bound to use all lawful means to preserve our own lives; and, therefore, he who, *in any case whatever*, destroys his life, or who permits it to be destroyed, when he is able, without denying the truth, or abandoning duty, to save it, is chargeable with the whole guilt belonging to the crime which we are about to consider.

Perhaps some of my hearers will say, What interest have we in the discussion of such a subject? Does the preacher suppose that we are capable of that miserable insanity, either intellectual or moral, which actuates the self-murderer? Let him rather direct his reasoning and his rebukes against the numerous other crimes to which we, or our children, may be in some measure exposed. But let him not take up our time in showing the evil of *Suicide*, against which every feeling of nature presents a barrier, and of which every dictate of reason shows the egregious folly.

Brethren, be not deceived! Every individual who hears me has an interest in this subject. Who can foresee the situations in which he may hereafter be placed, or the temptations by which he may hereafter be assailed? Or who can tell how soon the conduct of a near relative, or of a valued friend, may bring the subject home, with the deepest interest, to his bosom? It is probable, that the most of those who have fallen into this deplorable sin, were once as ready as any of my present hearers can now be, to think and to say, *What, is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?* In truth, it becomes depraved creatures, with regard to every sin, to be humble and watchful; for there is no sin into which they may not fall, if forsaken by restraining grace. That we may, therefore, be armed against the hour of temptation ourselves, and that we may be able to convince and warn others, let me request you seriously to attend, while I endeavour, *First*, To lay before you the Guilt and Folly of the sin in question; and, *Secondly*, By tracing the evil to its Sources, to put you on your guard against such principles and habits as may lead to danger.

I. My first object shall be to show that Suicide is really a crime. This is the more necessary, because the contrary has been asserted. There have been some who professed to believe that, although no man has a right to take away the life of *another*, yet every man has a right to dispose of *his own* life. In opposition to these, it is my purpose to show, that suicide is a sin against God—against human nature—against our fellow men—against all the dictates of enlightened reason—and against all our interests and hopes beyond the grave. Let us attend to each of these considerations in detail.

1. To destroy our own lives is A SIN AGAINST GOD. That God is the Author of our existence; that he sent us into the world; and that our time and talents, as well as our persons, are his property,

are self-evident propositions, which none but an atheist will deny. To suppose that rational and moral creatures, endowed with such capacities, and formed for such activity, could have come into existence by accident, or without any specific destination, is too unreasonable for credulity itself to admit. But if there be a God who made us, who has a right to our services, and whose Providence extends to all his creatures and all their actions, then there is an *end* for which we were made, a *task* which we are bound to accomplish, a *term of service* which it is our duty to fulfil; and, of course, he alone who placed us here, has a right to decide when this task is done, to judge when this term of service ought to close, and, in a word, to dispose of the life and the talents which his power has bestowed.

This is the representation which the scriptures every where give of human life. They speak of it as a *term* assigned, a *course* marked out, a *race set before us.* Hence the pious *Job* asks, *Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?* And in the spirit of the principle which this interrogation implies, he resolves, *All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.* The same lesson is taught by the Apostle *Paul*, when he exhorts, *Let us run with patience the race that is set before us;* when he expresses an earnest desire to *finish his course with joy;* and when, toward the close of life, he exclaims in holy triumph, *I have* *finished my course, I have kept the faith.* Such is the language in which the inspired writers speak of the life of man; a language which plainly teaches us that we are not at liberty to dispose of our own lives,* or to determine the period of our continuance in the world; but that we are to be patient and active as long as God is pleased to retain us in the present state, and to wait his pleasure for the period of our dismission. To take into our own hands the decision of this question; to abandon, without leave, the station in which we are placed, is the most unequivocal rebellion against God; the most direct opposition to his Providence; a presumptuous attempt to escape from his controul; and an ignoble breach of fidelity to a rightful Sovereign.

So consonant are these instructions of Scripture with the dictates of reason, that we find even a heathen moralist expressing himself on this subject in language remarkably similar to that of the sacred volume. *Socrates*, after being condemned to die,

* It will, perhaps, be said, that this reasoning, if admitted, would prove too much; for if no man have a right to dispose of his own life; and if all the legitimate authority of civil government over individuals be founded in *compact*, then no government can have a right to take away life, even for the most atrocious crimes; because no individual can, by any act of his own, either express or implied, convey to a community a right which he does not himself possess. But this objection proceeds upon an erroneous principle. The right of civil government to take away life, in certain cases, arises not from *compact*, but from *the will of God*, explicitly revealed in his word. We may even go further. Man would have no right to take away the lives of inferior animals, had there not been an express grant of the Creator for this purpose.

decides, in the strongest terms, against the lawfulness of suicide. He declares that men are the property of God; that they are in his custody; that they have no right, by a voluntary death, to escape from the sphere of action in which he hath placed them; and that those who do so, are as just objects of Divine displeasure and punishment as a slave who flees from the service of his master.* Such are the sentiments expressed by a heathen sage in his last moments, when, with death immediately before him, and surrounded by his beloved friends and pupils, he might be supposed to utter the fulness of his heart.†

Some of the advocates of this crime have contended, that as God is a benevolent Being, who delights in the happiness of his creatures, he cannot be supposed to regard with displeasure one who lays down his life when he ceases to enjoy it. But if this position be admitted, then it will follow, that every man is at liberty to pursue his own hap-

* Ὁ μὲν ουν εν απορ͗ρ͗ήτοις λεγόμενος περὶ αὐτῶν λόγος, ὡς ἔν τινι φρουρᾷ ἐσμὲν οἱ ἄνθρωποι, καὶ οὐ δεῖ δὴ ἑαυτὸν εκ ταυτης λυειν, οὐδ᾽ αποδιδράσκειν, μέγας τέ τις μοι φαίνεται, καὶ οὐ ῥάδιος διϊδεῖν. οὐ μεντοι ἀλλὰ τόδε γέ μοι δοκεῖ, ὦ Κέβης, εὖ λέγεσθαι, τὸ θεους ἐιναι ἡμῶν τους ἐπιμελουμενους, καὶ ἡμᾶς τους ἀνθρώπους ἓν των κτημάτων τοῖς θεοῖς εἶναι. ἢ σοὶ οὐ δοκεῖ οὕτως; Εμοιγ᾽, ἔφη ὁ Κέβης. Οὐκουν, ἦ δ᾽ ὃς, καὶ συ ἂν των σαυτου κτημάτων εἴ τι αὐτὸ ἑαύτὸ αποκτιννυοι, μη σημηναντός σου ὅτι βούλει αὐτὸ τεθνάναι, χαλεπαίνοις ἂν αὐτῷ, καὶ εἴ τινα ἔχοις τιμωρίαν, τιμωροῖο ἄν; Πάνυ γ᾽, ἔφη. Ισως τοίνυν. *Platonis Phædon.*

† *Socrates* by no means stood alone among the ancient moralists, in condemning suicide. It was also forbidden, on various grounds, by *Pythagoras*, by *Aristotle*, and by the laws of *Thebes* and *Athens*.

piness in whatever way he chooses; or, which is the same thing, that no act is displeasing to God, or a crime, which the agent commits with a view of promoting his own happiness. A doctrine which, if conceded, would lead to the justification of the most atrocious crimes; would destroy the firmest principles of moral obligation; and render the caprice of man, instead of the Divine law, the ultimate rule of action.

It is impossible, then, to justify suicide upon any other principles than those of *atheism;* or, at least, without a total denial of the government and providence of God. And this remark will receive much confirmation when we recollect, that the greater part, if not all those who have undertaken, at different periods, to be the advocates of the crime under consideration, either, were more than suspected of holding *atheistical tenets*, or avowed principles altogether inconsistent with any rational system of *theism*. To consider man as a creature independent, free from the restraints of Divine authority, at liberty to dispose of his own life and talents without reference to the will of the Creator; —what is this but practical atheism? What is this but a figment of an impious imagination, which though sometimes formed in minds professing to believe in the existence and providence of God, can only be cherished by a heart radically hostile to his character and government, and secretly desirous, if it were possible, to hurl him from his throne?

2. Suicide is a SIN AGAINST HUMAN NATURE. If there be a crime that may be called *unnatural*, this is emphatically that crime. It offers violence to the principle of self-preservation, which is innate and universal. It is an outrage on the dignity of those faculties with which the Author of nature has endowed us; and it is not less inconsistent with the virtues of fortitude and self-command, which so highly exalt and adorn the human character.

The fear of death is one of the strongest principles that dwell in the bosom of man. But why should this principle operate not only more generally and strongly in human beings than in the other animals, but almost exclusively in the former? It is difficult to assign any other reason for this fact, than that the all-wise Creator intended it as a barrier against the crime which we are considering; a crime which the brutal tribes have neither temptation nor ability to commit; but against which man, depraved, afflicted, and covered with evil, requires to be guarded by restraints of the most powerful kind. He then, who breaks through these restraints, who surmounts that abhorrence of self-destruction which the Author of nature hath so closely interwoven with every fibre of our constitution, is as great a monster in morals as an atheist in religion, or as the most hideous assemblage of deformities in animal nature.

But suicide is not only repugnant to every genuine feeling of human nature; it also offers insult to every just principle of human dignity. I know that the advocates of suicide are, in general, the most loquacious assertors of the *dignity of man.* This is the idol which they profess to worship, and contending for its honours they consider as their greatest merit. But does it comport with the dignity of our nature to act the part of *cowards*, *poltroons*, and *deserters?* Have fortitude, patience, and self-command ceased to be virtues? Putting moral and religious obligation out of the question, is it not more honourable for a rational being to bear afflictions with firmness, to meet misfortunes with magnanimity, and to surmount difficulties with triumph, than to sink under their pressure, or to fly from the conflict?

The outrage which this crime offers to the noble faculties with which the Creator has endowed us, also deserves our serious consideration. If the soul of man were less important, if his faculties were less dignified, the extinction of life would be an event comparatively trivial; the violence which it does to our nature would be of smaller account. But voluntarily to destroy a life, which is connected with the exercise of such exalted powers; wantonly to cut off a moral agent, so capable of activity and usefulness; to extinguish talents so rich, various and productive; is offering a violence to human nature as degrading as it is criminal. Nor is this reasoning invalidated by contending, as some advocates of suicide have done, that to destroy this mortal life is liberating these noble faculties from a species of imprisonment, and transferring them to a more enlarged and useful sphere of action. How do they learn this? The immortality of the soul, and a future state of bliss or suffering, are fully ascertained by Revelation only; a Revelation which, while it unfolds to our view another world, solemnly forbids us to precipitate ourselves by suicide into its awful realities.

3. Suicide is A SIN AGAINST SOCIETY. The benevolent Creator, who placed us in this world, has bound us to our fellow men, by many strong and interesting relations. These differ in number and in kind, according to circumstances; but they exist in all cases, and under all varieties of condition. It is a dictate of nature, as well as a doctrine of Revelation, that *no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.* In the civil Magistrate, in the Minister of the Gospel, and in all who, by their office, their talents, or their wealth, hold conspicuous stations, this crime is peculiarly atrocious, because they are connected with those around them by more numerous and more important ties than other men. And when such persons, regardless of all the obligations which bind them to society, abandon the post at which they are placed, they act a part which deserves to be stigmatized as selfish, unsocial, and base. Instead of living to bless mankind, by their instruction, their example, their beneficence, and their prayers, they meanly fly from the scene of labour and usefulness; and, attentive only to their own feelings, they deliberately rob

their fellow men of all the benefits which it was in their power to confer, by a patient course of piety and virtue. Nor is this all. When such an one destroys his life, he not only deprives society of an important member, and withholds from it the benefits which he might have bestowed, by continuing to live; but he also inflicts a positive injury, by displaying a mischievous example, and by recommending, as far as the influence of his conduct reaches, the same practice to others.

But admitting that he who meditates suicide is neither a Magistrate, nor a Minister of the Gospel, nor bound to society by any public or peculiar ties; yet let it be remembered, that the community has just claims upon *all* its members, from the highest to the lowest; and that to violate these claims, or to abandon the duties which they involve, is a criminal desertion, a fraud practised upon our species, an injury, the extent of which it is impossible to calculate, but which we have reason to believe is, in most cases, serious and lasting. Nor let any one plead that his case is peculiar, and that society can lose but little by the destruction of a single life: for if *one* individual, because he feels the inclination, has a right to take away his own life, then every other individual who feels a similar inclination has the same right; and if every one were to think and act accordingly, into what a field of blood would our world be converted! what darkness and mourning would cover the face of society!

what distrust, anxiety, and consternation would reign in every family, and torture every bosom!

But we may go further. Besides the injury done to society in general, he who destroys his own life seldom fails to inflict the deepest wounds upon all who stand more immediately related to him in domestic and social life. Say, miserable man! who art contemplating the crime of self-murder, hast thou no *parent*, the evening of whose days, by this crime, would be embittered, or whose grey hairs would be brought down with sorrow to the grave? Hast thou no amiable *partner* of thy life, who would be precipitated by this step into the deepest affliction? Hast thou no *tender babes*, who by thy desertion would be left fatherless, and exposed to all the dangers of an unpitying world? Hast thou no *brethren* or *sisters* to share in the grief, and the disgrace of thine unworthy conduct? Are there no *friends* who love thee, who would weep over thy folly and sin, and feel themselves wounded by thy fall? In short, would the execution of thy wicked purpose disturb the peace of no family? torture no bosom of sensibility and kindness? defraud no creditor? plunge no friend into difficulty? rob no fellow creature of advantage or enjoyment? Ah! if the evil terminated in thine own person, though still a crime, it would be comparatively small. But the consequences of such a step would probably extend beyond thy conception, and last longer than thy memory. Stay then, guilty man! stay thy murderous hand! Extinguish not the happiness and the hopes of a family, it may be, of many families! Forbear, O forbear to inflict wounds which no time can heal, and which may tempt survivors to wish that thou hadst never been born!

Let no one say, that he is *useless* in the world; that his life is of no value, either to his relatives, or to mankind; and, therefore, that he does no injury by taking it away. If any man be really useless, it is his disgrace and his sin; and to think of justifying one crime by pleading that he has committed a previous one, is as wretched logic, as it is detestable morality. But the degree of our usefulness in society is a question concerning which, as we are not competent to judge, so we are not at liberty to decide for ourselves. The victim of depression and melancholy may sometimes think himself an unprofitable member of the community, a mere *cumberer of the ground*, when his services are really substantial and important. And even admitting that he is, at present, so afflicted, so infirm, so vicious, so degraded, or so unfavourably situated in any respect, as to be entirely useless, has he lost every capacity of being otherwise in time to come? Or, if this capacity be now lost, is every possibility of recovering it certainly precluded? May not his infirmities be hereafter removed? the clouds which hang over him be dissipated? his vices be repented of and abandoned? his reputation be restored? and his means of usefulness become, if not great and extensive, at least important in a moderate sphere? If these things be duly considered, it will be manifest that there is not an individual breathing who can, with propriety, plead in defence of despair and suicide, that he is useless; as there is certainly no individual, on this side the grave, whose life either *is* not, or *might* not be, of some value to mankind.

It may be demonstrated then, that suicide is generally prompted by the most sordid and unworthy *selfishness*. It is a crime which sacrifices every thing on the altar of *individual feeling*. It is a practice which reverses all the doctrines of social benevolence, and sets up as a principle of action the detestable maxim, that private caprice and private enjoyment are to be regarded as more worthy objects of pursuit than public happiness. It is a crime, therefore, of which even the atheist, on his own principles, ought to be ashamed, but which the Christian should regard with peculiar abhorrence.

4. If we examine the MOTIVES which immediately prompt the unhappy to despair and suicide, we shall see, perhaps, still more strongly, the sin and folly of their conduct. No considerations whatever can possibly justify a step which has been shown to be a sin against God, against human nature, and against our fellow men: but if we attend to the motives which have generally led to this crime, we shall find them not only insufficient to

justify it, but also manifesting a degree of weakness and infatuation altogether unworthy of the rational character.

Let us go to yonder victim of impatience and despair, who wanders silent, melancholy, and alone, meditating the termination of his sorrows by the pistol, or the poisonous draught—Let us approach, and inquire why he is disgusted with life?—You are *embarrassed in your circumstances;* you have been robbed of your property by fraud, or by other disastrous occurrences; you have been precipitated from the height of affluence to the most abject poverty; *you cannot dig, to beg you are ashamed*, and therefore resolve to fly from life. But before you take this dreadful and irrevocable step, pause a moment, and answer me the following questions—Is a large portion of property indispensably necessary to happiness? Have not thousands been contented and happy with as small a pittance as that which you yet possess? Nay, have not some found *more* real enjoyment after being thus reduced, than they found in the days of their affluence and prosperity? Was not the Saviour of the world, when he sojourned upon earth, without *a place where to lay his head?* And has he not, by his example, made poverty and sufferings honourable? Besides, though you are now in straitened circumstances, may not a kind Providence hereafter smile upon you, and reward your industry with comfort and plenty? Who can tell but that, like *Job*, your *latter end*, in this respect, *may be more blessed than your beginning?*

But even supposing the worst; will you destroy a life on which so much depends, for the sake of treasures which are transient and unsatisfying; for a little glittering dust, which perishes in the using; "for so much trash as may be grasped thus?" Miserable estimate! ignoble alternative! Live! and exhibit the sublime, the edifying spectacle of one struggling with want, and yet holding fast his integrity.

If we inquire of another, we shall find that he is hurried on to despair by the prospect of *disgrace*. He has, perhaps, been betrayed into infamous crimes, or led, less criminally, into circumstances which, he fears, have destroyed his reputation, and he cannot think of surviving his character. But, alas! deluded man! are you so thoughtless as not to perceive that your calculation is as false as the design which you harbour is criminal? If you are now in disgrace, what advantage will you gain by hiding yourself in the grave? Certainly none. On the contrary, you will aggravate instead of diminishing the evil, because you will seal yourself up under eternal infamy, and cut off all hope of regaining public esteem. Rather live! and by a course of worthy actions, endeavour to retrieve your character. Live! and testify by your future conduct, that you are neither irreclaimable nor unprincipled.

A *third* is, perhaps, afflicted with a tormenting, or apparently an incurable *disease*. He prefers death to a life of torture, and therefore determines not to wait for his regular dismission from suffering. To such an one I would say, No man can certainly tell whether a disease which he thinks incurable may not afterwards be found to admit of some remedy, or at least of some alleviation. Dark and dismal as your prospect now is, you may, like *Job*, be again restored to health and enjoyment; or if not perfectly restored, your burden may be rendered comparatively light and tolerable. But supposing that your case is hopeless, and that your whole life is destined to be a scene of suffering, which is most becoming in a *rational being*, and especially in a *Christian*, to bear suffering with firmness, or to fly from it by illicit and cowardly means? What is it that raises to such an elevation the character of the martyrs and other primitive sufferers for the Gospel? What is it in their conduct which men of all habits and modes of thinking admire, and which sometimes even "extorts a trembling homage" from the blaspheming infidel? It is that divine magnanimity which deliberately chose to suffer the most excruciating tortures rather than to escape from them by the sacrifice of principle, or by yielding to forbidden demands.

A *fourth*, it may be, will plead, that he has the certain prospect of an *ignominious death*, by the hand of public justice; or of a still more dreadful execution, by the *lingering torments* of savage foes; and that he is, therefore, justifiable in dispatching himself in a more private and easy manner. Such have been the reasonings and conduct of some renowned personages, whose conduct on other occasions was more heroic, and more worthy of the rational character. But the same reasoning which was employed in the case of painful and incurable disease applies equally to this case. No man can be absolutely *certain* that the death which he considers as inevitable will be realized. Divine Providence has frequently interfered, in a most extraordinary manner, for the deliverance of those from whom all prospect of relief, from human sources, was cut off. But, setting this argument aside, who can tell what important ends the death which he fears is intended, by infinite Wisdom, to answer both to himself and to society? Unreserved submission to the will of God is always safe; while the smallest attempt to counteract this will is always both criminal and dangerous. Had those celebrated heroes of old, who embraced a voluntary death, rather than fall into the hands of enemies, or die by public execution, consented to live, and meet the dispensations of Providence with unshaken fortitude, they would have displayed a more sublime heroism; and none can tell how much they might have promoted the welfare and glory of their country.

Another has been disappointed in *love;* and, in the first emotions of despondency, considers life as insupportable. That tender passion which binds the sexes together, and lays the foundation of domestic happiness, is despised by none but those who never felt it; is condemned by none but those who renounce the authority of God, and are enemies of human happiness. But while this passion is allowed to be most important, and, when properly regulated, most laudable, yet let us not imagine, like those who borrow their principles of morality from the *stage*, or from *novels*, that love is the main business of life, and the attainment of its wishes all that is worth living for. There are considerations which should be regarded as paramount to every thing of this kind. There may be, and there doubtless frequently is, in this respect, an idolatry, as criminal as it is unworthy the rational character. But allowing to each case of disappointed attachment all that importance which the subject of it may require, how many considerations immediately present themselves which should induce the sufferer to lay aside despondency, and determine to live! A little time may restore peace to a mind which is now perturbed and melancholy. The object fondly sought may hereafter be attained, and abundantly reward a long and anxious pursuit; or if this be not the case, a kind Providence may have in store for the discouraged and despairing, a more suitable and a more happy connection.

A *sixth*, perhaps young in years, but old in *dissipation* and *vice*, has run the round of what he calls pleasures; and having found little happiness in this course, and supposing that life can afford nothing better; he resolves to escape from a scene in which he finds no objects that can any longer interest or gratify him. This is not unfrequently the case with those wretched mortals, who have sought no enjoyments but those of the sensual kind; who have cultivated no taste but for scenes of dissipation and licentiousness. But how degraded is that mind that can find no interesting employment, no gratifying pursuit in such a world as this! Where are those elevated pleasures which arise from the cultivation of our minds, from the acquisition of knowledge, from walking, with chosen companions, in the delightful fields of literature and science? Where are the sublime gratifications which flow from feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, instructing the ignorant, and directing the miserable wanderer "in the homeward way?" Where are the heavenly pleasures which arise from the exercise of grace and the discharge of holy duties? Can a world in which these are to be enjoyed be said to afford nothing that is worth living for? Blind and mistaken mortal! make trial of some of these pleasures; explore some of these paths to happiness, which you have hitherto neglected, and see if they be not worthy of your regard. Above all, open the volume of God, unfold the precious record of Redeeming Love, and there learn, by delightful experience, that the Gospel provides employment and pleasure for the mind, as much superior to the low gratifications of the sensualist *as the heavens are higher than the earth.*

Finally; a vain worshipper of human applause supposes suicide to be a distinction of bold, independent, and elevated minds, and therefore becomes his own murderer to get a name, to evince that he has firmness and courage enough to commit the crime. But we may say of *suicide*, what has been often and justly said of *duelling*, that it is, in most cases, the result of *cowardice* rather than of real *courage*. A distinguished Infidel, who lately died, when the dead body of his son, who had destroyed his own life, was found, exclaimed, "Poor insane coward!" and was never afterwards heard to mention the unhappy event.* Such, mistaken votary of fame! such is the sentiment which spontaneously arises in almost every mind in contemplating the conduct of the self-murderer! And thus will it generally be found, that what is fondly regarded as a source of honour, is in reality a monument of shame. But leaving out of sight the disgraceful nature of this conduct, let me ask him who contemplates this mode of raising himself in the estimation of his fellow men, whether there be not a thousand ways in which he may more worthily, more illustriously, and more permanently display his courage than by such a miserable act of weakness and folly? Is the exercise and the display of magnani-

* This is related of Dr. Erasmus Darwin, on occasion of the death of his son, of the same name, who drowned himself in the *Derwent*. See Miss Seward's *Life* of that distinguished physician, p. 295—297. The truth of the account has been, indeed, drawn into question by a subsequent writer; but there seems no good reason to doubt the correctness of a relation given by a friend so intimate with Dr. Darwin, and so much disposed to do honour to his memory, as Miss Seward. The anecdote, if true, is instructive. It shows that while the philosophy of Dr. Darwin, and, probably, the principles which he instilled into the minds of his children, were directly calculated to wrest from the mind its best consolations, and, of course, to promote despair and suicide; yet that, with all his atheism, he disapproved of self-murder, and considered it as a cowardly and degrading act.

mity thine object? Go, and in the faithful discharge of Christian duties—in the achievements of benevolence—in ruling thine own spirit—and in opposing error and vice in every form, thou wilt find scope enough for the firmest courage, and the greatest elevation of soul. Go, set thy face as a flint against the sneers and blasphemies of unbelief—wage inexorable war with the hydra of corrupt fashion—contend with zeal and perseverance for the faith once delivered to the saints—submit to labour, self-denial, and ridicule for the sake of doing good—in a word, dare to stand at thy post, and to be faithful in the discharge of every duty, whoever may oppose thee, and whatever it may cost thee. This is magnanimity worthy of men, and of Christians. This is magnanimity which will live and be remembered with honour, when *the name of the wicked shall rot*—when that wretched vanity, which so mistakenly sought for a name, shall be buried in oblivion.

Such are some of the considerations which have frequently prompted men to despair and suicide. Pride, vanity, impatience, cowardice, a criminal love of the world, a false estimate of happiness, the most unworthy and degrading selfishness. These, however decorated with plausible names, are the real motives which prompt to nine-tenths of the suicides that occur. But are they motives which an enlightened and virtuous mind can possibly vindicate? No, brethren! they are motives which reason forbids, which religion condemns, and which even a serious infidel must regard with disapprobation.

5. Once more; suicide IS SOLEMNLY FORBIDDEN BY ALL OUR INTERESTS AND HOPES BEYOND THE GRAVE.

It is common to see announced, in our vehicles of public intelligence, that such an one, in a melancholy hour, "put an end to his own *existence*." It were well for those who live and die in rebellion against God, if death were really the termination of their existence; for hideous as is the thought of sinking into the gulph of annihilation, even this gulph would be preferable to the abyss of the damned. But, alas! wretched as this hope is, it is cherished in vain. The infidel, indeed, will tell me that death is nothing; that it is only "diverting from its ordinary channel a portion of that red fluid" which appears necessary to the vital functions; that in destroying his own life, he only alters the modification of a small portion of matter—only arrests the motion of an animal machine. For, let it be distinctly remembered, that there is no class of men who go so far in denying the real honours, and trampling on the noblest prerogatives of human nature, as those who are ever prating about the *dignity* and *perfectibility* of man. These are the proud teachers, who would persuade us that man is a machine—that the soul is a non-entity—that eternity is a dream—and, of course, that the destruction of life is a trifle unworthy of notice.*

* "The supposition that man is a moral and accountable being, destined to survive the stroke of death, and to live in a future world, in a never ending state of happiness or misery, makes him a creature of incompara-

But woe to the unhappy mortal who, embracing this impious delusion, lifts the murderous hand against his own life! How will he be astonished and confounded to discover, that the extinction of this mortal life is something infinitely more serious than had ever been told him; that it is cutting the "slender thread on which hang everlasting things;" that it is terminating the day of grace; that it is putting an end to every opportunity of repentance and reformation; that it is hurrying an immortal spirit before the tribunal of its Judge, and fixing the condition of the soul in endless misery, or in endless joy!

But perhaps it will be asked, Can we entertain no hope of the final salvation of one who destroys his own life? This is a question which it ill becomes a blind and erring mortal to decide with confidence. It is possible that a child of God may be so far under the power of mental derangement,

bly more *consequence* than the opposite supposition. When we consider him as placed here by an almighty Ruler, and that the present life is his period of trial, the first link in a vast and interminable chain which stretches into eternity, he assumes a dignified character in our eyes. Every thing which relates to him becomes interesting; and to trifle with his happiness is felt to be the most unpardonable levity. If such be the destination of man, it is evident, that in the qualities which fit him for it his principal dignity consists: his moral greatness is his true greatness. Let the sceptical principles be admitted which represent him, on the contrary, as the offspring of chance, connected with no superior power, and sinking into annihilation at death, and he is a contemptible creature, whose existence and happiness are insignificant. The characteristic difference is lost betwixt him and the brute creation, from which he is no longer distinguished, except by the vividness and multiplicity of his perceptions."

HALL's *Sermon on Modern Infidelity. p.* 43.

as to rush unbidden into the presence of his Father. I believe that instances of this kind have sometimes occurred; and if so, concerning the salvation of such persons no doubt can be entertained. But it may be questioned, on very solid ground, whether a real Christian, *in the exercise of his reason*, ever became his own executioner. Let those who incline to adopt a more favourable opinion, ponder well that solemn declaration of the Spirit of God, *No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* How small, then, is the proportion of self-murderers for whom we can cherish the least hope beyond the grave! When men leave the world in an act of daring and deliberate rebellion against God, distrusting his providence, agitated by the worst of passions, and trampling upon all the obligations which bind them to their Creator and their fellow men, how can Charity herself avoid considering them as *strangers to the covenant of promise*, and weeping over them as *children of perdition!*

This conclusion will be confirmed, if we look into the sacred history, and examine the characters of *Saul*, *Ahitophel*, and *Judas*, the only instances of suicide which the pen of inspiration has recorded. Do we discover in the last moments of these wretched self-destroyers any thing to warrant a hope concerning their state after death? Alas! no. We find them throughout manifesting that spirit of pride and enmity to God, and that hateful compound of malice and despair, which characterize the fiend, and which torture the bosoms of the accursed in their dark abodes.

With what solemn language, then, does the consideration of his future destiny address every one who contemplates this mode of terminating his earthly sorrows! Pause, O man! and recollect, before the irrevocable step be taken—recollect that thou art to exist beyond the grave! Art thou, then, prepared to die? Art thou sure—miserable as thy present state may be—art thou sure that death will not land thee in still greater misery—in that prison of eternal despair, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*, and where the heaviest calamities of this life will sink into nothing when compared with that *torment, the smoke of which ascendeth for ever and ever?*

Such are the guilt, the folly, and the doom of the self-murderer. May God of his infinite mercy preserve us all from an infatuation so deplorable, from a crime of such complicated malignity! *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!* Amen.

DISCOURSE II.

JOB ii. 9, 10.

THEN SAID HIS WIFE UNTO HIM, DOST THOU STILL RETAIN THINE INTEGRITY? CURSE GOD, AND DIE. BUT HE SAID UNTO HER, THOU SPEAKEST AS ONE OF THE FOOLISH WOMEN SPEAKETH. WHAT! SHALL WE RECEIVE GOOD AT THE HAND OF GOD, AND SHALL WE NOT RECEIVE EVIL?

WE have seen the guilt and folly of suicide. With respect to such an evil we cannot be too fully apprized of its sources, nor be too carefully put on our guard against those sentiments and practices which may lead to the fatal temptation. Let us, therefore, proceed, in pursuance of our plan,

II. To develope some of the Sources of this crime, and to point out some of the principles and habits which expose to danger.

There are many who believe that suicide always arises from *insanity*. If by this be meant, that every self-murderer is impelled by a dreadful *infatuation,* which renders him a proper object of pity as well as of blame, it is doubtless a just opinion. But if the meaning be, that every one who commits this crime ought to be, of course, considered as in that state of mental derangement which is commonly denominated insanity, and which places its unhappy subject, for the time being, out of the class of moral agents, it is, I am persuaded, not only an error, but also an error of the most mischievous kind. Instances frequently occur, in which men detroy their own lives with the utmost apparent coolness, with great deliberation, after long and formal reasonings on the subject, and after the most regular disposition of their worldly affairs. To pronounce such persons *insane*, is a departure from every principle of probability, and from all propriety of language. It will be said, perhaps, that the commission of a crime so repugnant to every feeling of nature, and to every dictate of reason, can never be supposed to take place but by a person of disordered mind. But is not the murder of a parent, a husband, a wife, or a child, also an unnatural as well as an atrocious crime? Yet, when cases of this kind occur, we generally and justly ascribe them rather to great moral depravity than to intellectual derangement.

But those who ascribe suicide, in all cases, to insanity, are not merely chargeable with a speculative error. Their doctrine is calculated to do practical mischief. It tends to diminish, in the minds of those who embrace it, the *moral odium* which ought ever to be attached to the crime in question; and it tends, no doubt, further, to divert the attention of men from other and much more frequent sources of this crime, and to put them off their guard with respect to some of the most formidable enemies of our happiness and our lives. It shall, therefore, be my endeavour, in the sequel of this discourse, to expose some of the principal sentiments and practices which have already proved fatal to thousands, and by which thousands more are daily placed in circumstances the most perilous and threatening.

1. Suicide may be traced in many, perhaps in most cases, to FALSE PRINCIPLES IN RELIGION AND MORALS.

The most powerful ties which bind men to the present state of existence, are allowed, on all hands, to be the love of life and its enjoyments, and a strong sense of moral and religious duty. But if the former be taken away, as it frequently is, by a series of afflictions, how perilous, how deplorable is the situation of him who is either destitute of the latter, or has a feeble impression of its importance! We may confidently assert, that, in the large family of woe, there are thousands who, if they were not restrained by their *principles*, would, long since, have laid down the burden of life, and abandoned, without leave, the station in which Providence hath placed them. Every opinion, therefore, which is adverse to this sense of duty—every opinion which tends to make God less an object of fear and love, the standard of holiness less elevated, the obligations to holiness less powerful, sin less odious, the soul less precious, and eternity less awful, must obviously weaken the barriers against suicide; because all such opinions render life, in the estimation of those who embrace them, less important, and death a less interesting and solemn event.

Thus, when a man believes that there is no moral Governor of the universe; no Judge to whom he is accountable for his actions; no heaven to be sought; no hell to be avoided; will he not, of course, feel himself at liberty to dispose of his own life at pleasure? And if he be at any time weary of existence, and find the affections which bind him to his family and friends more than counterbalanced by the pressure of suffering, what is there to prevent his taking refuge in the grave? It is true, indeed, as was formerly observed, there are strong reasons why even the *atheist* ought to condemn and abhor suicide; but it is equally true, that the native tendency of his principles is to cherish that cold selfishness, that proud impatience, and that gloomy despair, which have so often prompted, and which so naturally prompt men to fly from life whenever it becomes a burden.

Nor is it merely the extreme of infidelity, or total *atheism*, which may be considered as leading to the sin in question. To believe that the God who *judgeth in the earth* is a being *altogether such an one as ourselves;* to deny his authority over us; to regard his threatenings as empty formalities, and his mercy as mere connivance at sin: in short, to adopt any radical error concerning his character and will, the relation which we sustain to him, or the genius of the Gospel;—every mistake of this kind has a tendency, in proportion to its magnitude, to weaken the sense of moral obligation, to take away from the mind its most precious supports, and to render it the dupe of every impatient feeling, and the sport of every desperate passion.

Do you demand proof of this? Inquire at what periods, and in what communities, the crime in question has been most common, and you will find that it has been precisely at those periods, and in those communities in which impiety and profligacy were most prevalent. In the early ages of the Roman republic, we are told, that suicide was seldom committed: but when luxury, aided by the Epicurean and Stoical philosophy, had corrupted their simplicity and virtue, the Romans soon began to seek shelter in voluntary death from their misfortunes and the effects of their vices; and it was not long before this crime attained a most alarming frequency among that people. A comparison of the state of opinions and morals in different parts of modern Europe, would lead, it is believed, to a similar result; and the history of our own country, beyond all question, illustrates and confirms the position before us. At a period not very remote, when simple and industrious habits characterized even our populous cities, and when licentious principles were comparatively little known, a case of self-murder was one of the rarest occurrences. But more lately, with the increase of luxury and infidelity, we have seen this unnatural crime every day gaining ground. Do you call for evidence still more pointed and explicit? Examine those apologies and attempted justifications of their conduct which self-murderers have frequently left for the information of survivors, and you will seldom fail to perceive that either total infidelity, or some other modification of anti-christian opinions, perverted their judgment, corrupted all their reasonings on the subject, and impelled them to the fatal deed. One professes to believe that there is no God; another denies the doctrine of his providence; a third supposes that He is "all mercy," and that a disposition to punish sin makes no part of his character; and all agree in asserting that men have a right to dispose of that life which the Creator gave, and which He alone can restore. There is probably no perpetrator of this crime, from the blind *atheist*, who sits in Christian light, to the deluded *Gentoo*, immersed in pagan darkness,* who does not reconcile his mind to the wicked purpose either by the total rejection of religion, or by the adoption of erroneous and corrupt opinions. The mischief done by false principles in such cases as these, is too evident to be questioned, and too shocking to be contemplated without horror.

And here I cannot help remarking more explicitly, what was transiently hinted in another place,

* The *Shastah* is said to forbid suicide, under severe penalties; yet we are told that the *Gentoos*, taught by the *Brahmins* to despise death, and to consider this mode of terminating life as honourable, frequently destroy themselves, especially when they become aged and infirm.

that the mischievous influence on popular opinions produced by many *dramatic representations*, and by licentious *novels*, may probably be considered as leading to many cases of the crime before us. Perhaps some will pronounce this a far-fetched and illiberal supposition. But let me ask such objectors, whether many of these compositions do not make virtue and religion to appear contemptible, and vice honourable, attractive, and triumphant? Do they not frequently put corrupt opinions into the mouth of some favourite hero, the splendor of whose character, in other respects, is made to embellish the most detestable sentiments, and the force of whose eloquence is employed to recommend the most criminal maxims? Do they not often represent the most odious crimes that mortals can commit, and suicide among the rest, as venial faults, and sometimes as no faults at all? In a word, are not many of them constructed precisely as if their leading object were to frame an apology for every passion, and to plead for the indulgence of every corrupt propensity?* Is it far-fetched or illiberal to say that such compositions have a tendency fa-

* It would be easy to give many examples in support of these remarks. Even the tragedy of *Cato*, though the production of a decided friend to virtue and religion, has been pronounced, by the best judges, to have a tendency favourable to suicide. Indeed, some accurate observers have asserted, that the exhibition of this celebrated tragedy on the stage has seldom failed to be followed by instances of self-murder, which there was good reason to believe were connected with these exhibitions. The moral of that detestable novel, the *Nouvelle Eloise*, by Rousseau, is, on this subject, extremely questionable. For, though the author argues eloquently on both sides of the question, concerning the lawfulness of suicide, yet some have supposed that his arguments in favour of that crime are calculated, and were intended by him, to make a deeper impression than those offered against it.

vourable to suicide, and that those who habitually delight in and peruse them are in the high road of danger? No, brethren, it is rather a subject of astonishment and regret that so many who bear the Christian name appear to be so little impressed with a sense of this danger, and that some even doubt its reality.

Infidelity, then, or, what is little if any better, those lax principles of religion, which make God an accommodating and capricious being, his law a solemn mockery, and his gospel a minister of sin, may be considered as the fatal delusion, which is not only poisoning the hearts and corrupting the morals of multitudes, but which is also daily precipitating thousands into premature graves. Where this delusion reigns, no virtue can be considered as stable, no moral tie as permanent, no life as secure. This is the blind and relentless guide, who first flatters, deceives, and plunges into misery; and then, having no consolation to administer, with cold indifference prepares the instrument of death, puts it into the hand of his victim, and, with "demon smile," prompts him to the murderous purpose. Mortals! behold your danger, and fly from it! When you listen to the sneers and suggestions of the infidel, remember that you are not only listening to one who would destroy the hopes of the soul, but who may also be regarded as indirectly a conspirator against your lives. Avoid with abhorrence his principles and his artifices. Be it your study to be early instructed and fixed in those principles which will enable you to detect his fallacies, to answer his arguments, and to despise his sneers. Unless you are thus armed, there is no danger to which you may not be considered as exposed. Ah! how perilous, how pitiable is the situation of that youth who is permitted to go forth on the stage of action, without principles, without any acquaintance with the Gospel, without a knowledge either of the dangers to which he is exposed, or the means of defence! What can we expect of such an one, but that, like the mariner who ventures abroad on the trackless ocean, without compass or chart, he will be deceived by every false appearance, become the sport of every tempest, and be, at length, either dashed on the rocks, or swallowed up in the merciless waves?

2. Another source to which we may trace many instances of suicide, is AN EARLY AND EXCESSIVE INDULGENCE IN THE PLEASURES OF LIFE.

When sensual pleasures are sought and indulged under the restrictions, and with that moderation which the law of God, as well as reason requires, they, no doubt, have their value, and are to be regarded as a substantial part of human enjoyment. When this *economy of pleasure*, if I may so express it, is early and diligently observed, that vigour, both of body and mind, which is so necessary to earthly happiness, will generally be retained till the close of life. But when worldly pleasures become our chief business, the grand object of pursuit, they never fail to disappoint themselves, and to defeat their own purpose. The most exquisite gratification, when frequently repeated, and especially when carried to excess, palls upon the sense; the capacity for enjoying it diminishes with each inordinate repetition; and when indulgence is carried still further, it produces disgust and loathing. Yes, my young friends, he who *makes haste to enjoy life* may " spread happiness into wild luxuriance," may appear, for a time, to taste the most enviable felicity; but he is over-drawing from that fund of enjoyment which should exhilarate his following years; he is " exhausting that radical vigour" which is necessary to render his cheerfulness permanent; and all that can be expected, after a little while, is languor, satiety, and weariness of life.

That such an infatuated course has sometimes produced these melancholy effects, and terminated in suicide, is too well attested to admit of controversy. An eminent medical Writer* tells us that a gentleman of polished manners, and comfortable circumstances, one day said to him, " A ride out in the morning, and a warm parlour and a pack of cards in the afternoon, is all that life affords;" and that, in a short time afterwards, to show that such a life had lost, in his estimation, all its charms, he shot himself. The annals of suicide, beyond doubt, record many cases of a similar kind. Those wretched beings who, by early excesses, as irra-

* See DARWIN's *Zoonomia*, vol. ii. class iii. 1. 2. where the reader will find several remarkable instances of suicide recorded.

tional as they are criminal, have exhausted all their sources of enjoyment, and lost all relish of life, not unfrequently terminate their mad career by this unnatural crime.* The sordid objects of their idolatry ceasing to be a refuge from themselves, they sink under the burden of their own minds.

How miserable, then, is the prospect, and how extreme the danger, of him who has grown up destitute of all taste for any pleasures but those of the sensual kind—who finds no happiness but in the whirl of dissipation, in the sound of the viol, in licentious company, or in the luxurious indulgences of the festive board—who has run round and round again the whole circle of enjoyments of which he is capable, and can find nothing new to interest or gratify him? No wonder that such an one should be frequently ready to say, *My soul is weary of my life.* No wonder that he should "fill up the circle of his joys long before he has completed the measure of his duration, and either wretchedly sit down, for the remainder of his days, in gloomy discontent, or rashly cut them short in despair."

* "Sir Philip Mordaunt was young, sincere, brave, an Englishman. He had a complete fortune of his own, and the love of the king his master, which was equivalent to riches. Life opened all her treasure before him, and promised a long succession of future happiness. He came; tasted of the entertainment; but was disgusted, even in the beginning. He professed an aversion to living; was tired of walking round the same circle; had tried every enjoyment, and found them all grow weaker at every repetition. 'If life be in youth so displeasing (cried he to himself), what will it appear when old age comes on? If it be at present indifferent, sure it will then be execrable.' This thought embittered every reflection; till, at last, with all the serenity of perverted reason, he ended the debate with a pistol."

Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World.* Let. lxxiii.

3. A habit of INTEMPERATE DRINKING frequently leads to weariness of life, despair, and suicide.

It would be impossible, in the bounds of a common discourse, to trace and enumerate all the evils arising from this pernicious indulgence. Its destructive effects on the bodies, the minds, the estates, the reputation, and all the comforts of those who yield themselves to its power, form one of the most melancholy chapters in the history of man. But in reciting the numberless evils to which intemperance gives rise, we may unquestionably consider *suicide* as among the most conspicuous and dreadful. I speak not now of the tendency of this sin *indirectly* to destroy life; to injure the bodily health; to bring on languor, organic obstructions and derangements, the most loathsome and tormenting diseases, the vitiation of the whole system, and finally death.* I speak not now of those poisonous effects of the intoxicating draught, which are proclaimed by the pale looks, the emaciated forms, the trembling hands, and the tottering step of multitudes around us, who are gradually sinking into untimely graves. On this picture of human degradation and destruction I forbear, at present, to dwell; and God grant that none of those who now hear me may ever become acquainted with it by personal experience! But I speak of those in-

* Professor RUSH calculates that not less than *four thousand* persons die annually, from the abuse of ardent spirits, in the United States. See his interesting and instructive *Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits upon the Human Body and Mind.* p. 38, fourth edition.

stances in which habits of intemperance have so perverted and disordered the mind, so clouded every prospect, so tortured the animal feelings, or so plunged their miserable subjects into melancholy and despair, as to tempt them to take refuge from the burden of suffering in a voluntary death. Instances of this kind are by no means rare. Rare did I say? It is probable that a large portion of the suicides which occur are directly or remotely connected with this species of intemperance.

The course by which habits of intoxication conduct men to this catastrophe is direct and natural. While these habits debilitate the intellectual, and pervert the moral faculties, they inflame the passions, and add new strength to every corrupt propensity. While they weaken the power of self-command, they give a force to the appetites, and a turbulence to the feelings, which require a more than ordinary share of self-government. They derange the nervous system; give rise to a host of morbid sensations; produce languor, self-loathing, and madness;* and from these the transition is short and rapid to weariness of life, despair, and suicide.

Every drunkard, then, may be said to be in danger of falling into this crime. In his intervals of sobriety and reflection he may imagine that such an

* "The late Dr. Waters," says Dr. Rush, "while he acted as house pupil and apothecary of the Pennsylvania Hospital, assured me, that in one-third of the patients confined by this terrible disease (madness) it had been induced by ardent spirits." *Inquiry*, p. 12.

event is impossible. Every feeling of his nature, and every principle of his heart, may rise with indignation against it. But in those periods of degradation, when he is under the power of the destructive stimulus; when reason is dethroned; when passion, in all its brutal fierceness, bears sway; when torturing sensations, self-reproaches, and gloomy prospects render life a burden, he stands on the brink of a precipice, into which no one can assure him that he may not, in an evil hour, desperately plunge.

4. Another habit, which frequently leads to the crime under consideration, is that of GAMING.

The evils arising from the vice of gaming, like those of drunkenness, are too numerous to be recounted within moderate limits, and too dreadful to be contemplated without horror. Among the many dangers attending this vice, one, and by no means the smallest, is, that it is, more than almost any other, *delusive* and *fascinating*. With regard to most other crimes, their guilt is too obvious to be denied, and their odium too flagrant to be encountered without a blush. But in gaming there is a semblance of decorum and of fairness which reconciles to the practice multitudes who mean to support a character for probity; a magic charm, which has frequently overcome the strongest minds; a progressive influence, which gradually steals upon its victim, until his subjection is completed, and his destruction sealed.

Gaming, when it takes possession of the mind, and becomes a habit (and every one who indulges in it at all ought to remember that he is in danger of this), is, perhaps, one of the most unrelenting and cruel tyrants that every held in subjection a miserable slave. It dazzles but to deceive; it flatters but to trample under feet; it allures but to destroy. It tends to undermine every virtuous principle, to harden the heart, and to convert him who once abhorred duplicity and fraud, into a determined villain. The gamester is agitated by a thousand contending passions. At the cast of the die, or the turning up of a card, he is alternately the sport of hope and fear, joy and grief, confidence and despair. He is held in a suspense more painful than racks and tortures, till it is decided whether his wishes succeed; and when he finds that they succeed not, which is generally the case, he retires mortified, reproaching himself, out of humour with mankind, filled with malignant passions, or perhaps weary of life, furious, and desperate.

Do you doubt the truth of this representation? Let me carry you to the gaming-table, and unfold to you the scenes which are there presented. Enter that apartment, where the votaries of this work of darkness are assembled. Behold the hollow eyes, the pale complexions, the haggard looks, which mark its wretched occupants! See the suspense, the anxiety, the fear, the rage, the horror, the despair, which alternately sit upon the countenances of the miserable group! Hear the disputes, the mutual recriminations, the oaths, the imprecations, the blasphemies, which break forth on every side! See one victim of plunder after another retiring, ruined in fortune, covered with shame, stung with remorse, finding no consolation from within or without; and, unable to encounter the upbraidings of friends, the reproaches of conscience, the contempt of the world, or the tears of a ruined family, flying to the instrument of destruction to set him free from a life which he no longer considers as a blessing!*

Is this an exaggerated picture? No, my hearers, it is a representation dictated by *truth and soberness.* It is a scene exhibited, in whole or in part, every day in our own city; and would to God we were

* The following anecdote is extracted from a work published a few years ago. "In ——— lived a gentleman and his wife, blessed with a competent fortune, health, mutual love, and peace of mind. They had two children, amiable and promising, and appeared to enjoy, in a very high degree, the numerous comforts with which they were surrounded. Toward the close of the summer of 1765, the gentleman happening to fall in company with some neighbouring friends, who proposed to waste an hour at *cards*, he consented, more out of complaisance than love of the game, to join them. Like other gamesters, he met with a variety of fortune, and being warm with liquor, he was inconsiderately drawn in before the company broke up, to involve himself more than his estate could bear. The next day, on sober reflection, he could not bear the thought of that distress which his folly had brought upon his beloved wife and children, and therefore had not the courage to acquaint her with what had happened. In the midst of pangs to which he had been hitherto a stranger, he was visited, and again tempted, by one of the preceding night's company, to try his fortune once more. To drown reflection, and in the hope of recovering his loss, he flew to the fatal place; nor did he leave it till he had lost his all. The consequence of which was, that the next day, in indescribable despair, after writing to acquaint his wife with what had happened, he shot himself. The news of this deprived the lady of her senses. She is (or at least lately was) confined in a mad-house; and her two children are thrown, beggared and friendless, on the world."

not sometimes called to witness and deplore the miserable end which has been described! The same scenes are also displayed in other populous places. We are told that, in the city of *Paris*, where the number of suicides is greater than in any other city in the civilized world,* a majority of the cases which occur are those of persons who have become unfortunate and desperate at the gaming-table. In every part of the globe, and in almost every class of society, this destroyer boasts of his victims. Yes, brethren, gaming is that fascinating and dishonourable vice—I repeat it, gaming is that fascinating and dishonourable vice which is daily destroying the fortune, the probity, the peace, and the lives of thousands. It is a vice from whose haunts no one who once permits himself to enter them can be sure of escaping with safety; a vice,

* M. Mercier, who wrote in 1782, says *(Tableau de Paris)*, that the annual number of suicides in *Paris* was then about *one hundred and fifty*. There is reason to believe that the number, since that time, has been considerably greater. In *London* the average number of suicides per annum was said, in 1787, to be about *thirty-two;* though this also probably fails at present much short of the truth. In *Edinburgh* (which contains about 80,000 inhabitants), the average number is said to be *four*. In *Geneva* (which contains about 25,000 inhabitants) about *eight*. See *Encyclopædia*, article *Suicide*. The writer of this article observes, "Our accounts respecting the city of *London* are very imperfect; but we think ourselves entitled to conclude, that suicide is more common among the great and wealthy than among the lower ranks; and that it is usually the effect of *gaming* and *dissipation*."

Mr. Colquhoun, the celebrated writer on the police of the city of *London*, in conversation, a few years ago, with a friend of the author, then resident in that city, speaking of a certain gaming-house, which had a short time before become known to him, said, "That house may be expected to produce at least *four* or *five* suicides annually, as long as it is supported."

therefore, from which every one who would avoid destruction should fly with trembling steps.

With what painful emotions, then, must the friend of human happiness contemplate the evident progress of this vice in our city!* It is enough to appal the stoutest heart to look upon the scene! Our young men, the hope of the Church and of the State, are growing up a race of gamblers, sporting away at once their time, their health, their principles, and their lives. Our aged men, surrendering that virtuous dignity which should adorn the hoary head, are also found in the same places of criminal resort, and giving the countenance of their example to the fashionable corruption. Nay, even some of our Females, who aspire to an elevated place in society, are not ashamed to be seen spending a large portion of their time in a systematic and enthusiastic devotedness to gaming, and formally initiating their daughters into this *mystery of iniquity.* Guilty parents! you are treasuring up misery and tears for yourselves and your offspring! Unhappy children! flee from the contagion of parental example, or you are undone!

* The increase of gaming in the city of New-York is unquestionably great, and calls aloud for every remonstrance of the moralist and the christian, as well as for every exertion of the civil magistrate. It is said, that in addition to all the public gaming tables with which the city is filled, and which are crowded day and night with customers, the number of *private parties* for gaming (at which some of those who ought to be *mothers in Israel* make a conspicuous figure), have been so numerous for a considerable time past, as to withdraw from the *Theatre* that encouragement which was necessary for its support. *If Satan cast out Satan, how shall his kingdom stand?* Would to God that the conflict between these two enormous nuisances in society might be destructive to both!

5. Suicide is frequently produced BY THE INDULGENCE OF CRIMINAL LOVE.

It is unnecessary, in illustrating this assertion, to premise, that Wedded Love is the source of rich and extensive benefits to mankind. Constituted by our all-wise Creator as the great cement of society, it sheds numberless blessings on our apostate world. It lays the foundation of domestic union, peace, and happiness. It creates the tenderest relations; gives rise to the purest affections, and binds those who partake of its comforts to life and to the community, by ties of the strongest and most interesting kind. It elevates the character of the individual, by cherishing some of the noblest virtues; and extends at once our enjoyments and our usefulness, by carrying us beyond ourselves, and multiplying our interests, our cares, and our hopes. Marriage does more to soften the heart, to cultivate social affection, to promote humanity, sympathy, and kindness, and to unite and harmonize society, than a volume would be sufficient to display.

But that passion, which, when held in subjection to the law of God, is productive of such benign effects, is no sooner given up to the depraved and capricious will of man, than it pours on society evils countless in number, and immeasurable in extent. However lightly the indulgence of criminal love may be regarded by the gay, the inconsiderate, and the licentious, there is scarcely any species of sin which more certainly and unavoidably gives rise to an enormous mass of depravity and misery. It corrupts the whole moral character; it pollutes the imagination; it hardens the heart; it cherishes duplicity, selfishness, falsehood, meanness, and the tyranny of appetite; it perpetuates disease; destroys the peace of families; vitiates and convulses the social system; degrades the reputation, and embarrasses the worldly circumstances of its votaries; entails infamy and misery on posterity; and brings multitudes to untimely graves. By the indulgence of criminal love, who can tell how many parental and conjugal feelings have been violated; how many fair prospects have been blasted; how many confident and endearing hopes have been withered; how many consciences have been wrecked; how many bosoms, once the seats of virtue and peace, have been converted into the residence of shame, remorse, and despair? Great Searcher of hearts! thou knowest.

These mischiefs fall with peculiar weight on the tender sex. It is true, the vile seducer himself is often brought into disgrace and suffering by his sin, and sometimes sunk into the deepest infamy and woe. But this is more frequently the portion of her who criminally yields to his arts. Could we trace the history of those wretched females who become the prey of ungoverned passion, what a series of melancholy pictures would be presented to our view! We should behold some anticipating the approach of disgrace, and, in the tumult of grief and despondency, destroying their own lives. We should see others passing through successive scenes of prostitution, disease, poverty, abandonment, and complicated misery, to an end more degrading, and more dreadful than language can describe. We should contemplate a third class living only to deceive and corrupt the innocent, and dragging many an unsuspecting victim into the same gulf of vice and perdition.

Seest thou a man, then, who gives himself up to the government of this criminal passion? he has no security that another week may not rank him with those wretched mortals, who have been prompted by remorse and self-execration, to fly from life. Seest thou a female who listens to the persuasions of a seducer, who parlies with temptation, or who yields to an artful deceiver? Wonder not if she should be hurried onward, contrary to all her resolutions, in the path of sin, until the extremes of unblushing lewdness, and the horrors of self-murder close her career.

6. Men are frequently driven to weariness of life, and suicide, by HABITS OF IDLENESS.

The structure both of the body and the mind of man requires habitual action to maintain their vigour and comfort unimpaired. Activity is the parent of health, vivacity, and enjoyment. That uniform industry which employs all our faculties without oppressing them, spreads a benign influence over the whole man. It tends to keep the mind awake, serene, and cheerful; it confers on the animal feelings all the luxury of vigorous and healthful sensation; it guards the affections from a thousand vain and irregular wanderings; and contributes, at once, to our physical, intellectual, and moral welfare.

On the other hand, idleness is the parent of many vices. It has been properly styled the rust and canker of the mind. To say nothing of the embarrassments and poverty which are its natural and general result, and which frequently produce the most melancholy effects, it gives rise to a host of more radical and alarming evils. Like a slow and deadly poison, it preys upon all the faculties of man. It enfeebles and paralizes the understanding; it weakens the memory; it clouds and darkens the imagination; it lays open the mind to the incursions of criminal desire; it invites the inroads of temptation; it diminishes, and gradually destroys, that state of healthful and pleasurable sensation in which so much of our enjoyment consists; it brings on languid feelings, low spirits, hypochondriacal affections, and a complication of bodily and mental tortures, which frequently render their subjects more miserable than the slave who labours in chains. To the idle man nothing has its true relish. His time hangs heavy on his hands: he knows not how to dispose of himself: every thing appears dull and uninteresting: the most trivial difficulties discourage him: the smallest appearance of danger alarms and disheartens him: gloom and melancholy succeed:

he betakes himself to the intoxicating draught for relief; but this, instead of bringing the expected relief, eventually adds new force to every torture, and increases the weight of his miseries. Is it wonderful, that, in this situation, thousands have considered existence as a curse; and that some, impatient of the load of wretchedness, have put an end to their lives? No, it is rather to be wondered that such is not more frequently the termination of their ignoble course.

Let it be remembered, then, that the habitually idle are always more or less in danger of falling into the sin under consideration. Their habits are precisely those which are calculated to nourish discontent, to make them the prey of every mental corrosion, and to render life a wearisome course. On the other hand, the constant employment of our time in some useful and interesting pursuit, is not only one of the best guards of virtue, but also, next to Religion, the surest source of happiness, the best defence of health and life. "Were I asked," says an elegant writer, "upon what circumstances the prevention of spleen and low spirits chiefly depends, I would borrow the ancient orator's mode of enforcing the leading principles of his art, and would reply, *Employment*, *Employment*, *Employment*. This is the grand *panacea* for weariness of life, and all the train of fancied evils, which prove so much more insupportable than real ones."*

* *Letters to a Son.* By J. Aikin, M. D. Vol. i. Let. 18.

7. Another source of discontent, and of those violent passions which frequently terminate in suicide, is CHERISHING IMMODERATE DESIRES AND AIMS WITH REGARD TO THIS WORLD.

An inordinate love of the world is productive of evils unnumbered and boundless. It has been justly observed, that other sins are the body and the members, but that this may be considered as the life and the soul of all irreligion. This criminal attachment, this ignoble idolatry, is at war with every duty, and is the fruitful source of almost every species of mischief. It not only alienates the affections from God, and from heavenly treasures, but it pollutes the heart with sordid desires; fills the mind with discontent, anxiety, and perplexing fears; prompts to all the arts of dishonourable gain; and, when loss and disappointment ensue, which in this world of sorrow may be regarded as events of course, leaves the miserable dupe of its promises to that hopeless sorrow which *worketh death.* Yes, brethren, that spirit of bold and extravagant speculation, that impatience of the progress of gain in its ordinary course, that *making haste to be rich*, that inordinate fondness for parade and expensive living, that disposition for rash and unwarranted adventure in trade, that criminal and contemptible affectation of those who are beginning the world, to vie with the most wealthy and established; in a word, that insatiable thirst after the possessions and the splendours of life, which so remarkably characterize our country and our times, combined with a disregard of all the simple, steady, and prudent maxims of business, are evils over which every benevolent man sighs and mourns; evils in which it requires little discernment to see involved the ruin of many a fortune, the wreck of many a conscience, the destruction of individual and family peace, and all those miseries which so frequently plunge men into despair, and tempt them to become their own executioners. *The love of money*, saith an inspired apostle, *is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. For they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.*

It was *the love of money* that prompted *Judas* to that act of complicated baseness which afterwards filled him with remorse, and impelled him to become the destroyer of his own life. It is the same sordid spirit which, in every age, causes multitudes to sink under bereavement and bankruptcy; and, when the natural reward of their avarice overtakes them, to cry out, *There is no hope.* Mark that child of misfortune,—how disappointments afflict him; how losses overwhelm him; how ready he is, when his circumstances look gloomy, to sink into despair! Alas! unhappy man! he has loved the world too much, or he would not be so deeply affected with the flight of its possessions. His heart has been too much bound up in earthly treasures, or their temporary failure would not thus agitate and depress him. Riches were his idol, or he would not be ready to say, when they are snatched from him, *Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?*

But if immoderate desires after worldly possessions be so replete with danger; that irregular and extravagant *ambition*, which worships fame, which is ever panting after distinction and power, is equally dangerous to human happiness and life. When this ambition fills and governs the mind of any man, misfortunes may be expected to drive him to despair, and the failure of his plans to prove insupportable. To such an one obscurity is torture, and defeat is death. He who imagines that high station, conquest and glory are the only attainments which render life desirable, is in a fair way to become the victim of disappointment and shame. It was this mistake that gave adversity so great a power over the mind of *Saul*, the king of Israel, and that led him, when defeat and dishonour stared him in the face, to choose death rather than life. It was because the treacherous *Ahitophel* was a slave to the same species of idolatry, that, when he saw his influence and importance declining, he determined no longer to live. Such also was the error, and such the degrading end of some personages distinguished in profane history, and too often regarded with blind admiration, especially by the young and unthinking. Was it *heroism* which prompted *Cato*, *Brutus*, *Cassius*, and *Hannibal* to become the destroyers of their own lives? No! it was the madness of *ambition;* it was the littleness of *pride.* Genuine heroism would have taught them to act more nobly. "Had *Cato*'s pride permitted him to yield himself to the generosity of *Cæsar*, his character and influence might have contributed to retard the slavery of his country, which his death tended to hasten. Had *Brutus* and *Cassius* not executed the fatal resolution which they had formed, of dying by their own hands in case of misfortune, the battle of *Philippi* might have had a very different issue. Had *Hannibal* surrendered himself to the Romans, instead of swallowing poison, he would have gained more glory in braving their tortures, than he won in the battle of *Cannæ*."

8. The last source of this crime which I shall mention, is THE WANT OF SINCERE AND VITAL PIETY.

The danger resulting from false principles in morals and religion was before stated. This, however, is not the only danger. To entertain correct opinions is useful and important; but there are thousands who *hold the truth in unrighteousness.* Where the life and the power of Christianity are wanting; where its doctrines are studied only as beautiful speculations, and its consolations regarded only as pleasing theories, who can rationally look for that divine efficacy, which strengthens, consoles, and animates under the trials of life? It cannot be found. No, the mere nominal votary of Religion, for aught that he possesses, may be left to live comfortless, and die in despair. A theoretical religion—hear it Formalists!—a theoretical religion may enable you to converse plausibly on the subject of your faith, or to appear with credit in a circle of polemics; but what will it avail in the day of adversity and sorrow, when earthly comforts forsake you, and when the demon of despondency assails and darkens the mind? In that day, the man who has nothing more than *orthodox opinions* to arm him against temptation, may be expected ignobly to sink under its power.

The greatest security, therefore, against the crime under consideration, is *the power of godliness* living and reigning in the heart. This holy spirit not only tends to inspire that fortitude which triumphs over the afflictions of life, and to cherish that submission which cheerfully acquiesces in the divine will; but it is also that spirit which unites those who possess it with the Saviour, constitutes them members of his Body, the Church, and gives them the firmest pledge that they shall be *kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.* It was not *the form of godliness*, but *the power thereof*, that supported *Job* in his affliction, and enabled him to repel with abhorrence the proposal of suicide. It was not *the form of godliness*, but *the power thereof*, that raised the *martyrs* of old above the fear of man, that strengthened them to bear every torture rather than sin against God, and that enabled them to sing with joy in the midst of the flames.

I have thus endeavoured to show the guilt and folly of suicide; and by tracing the evil to its principal sources, to point out some of those sentiments and habits which may lead to danger. It only remains that I commend what has been said to the consideration of every hearer, and especially of those whom it more immediately concerns.

Parents! this subject demands your solemn attention!—You see the numerous dangers to which the traveller through this vale of tears is exposed. How should your solicitude be excited, your zeal be roused, and all the tender anxieties of parental affection be called into exercise, in behalf of your Offspring, who are entering on the journey of life, and about to encounter all its perils! You are the guardians of their health and lives, you form their morals, you direct their pursuits, you are the depositories of their happiness in this world, and, in a degree, in that which is to come. With what unceasing care, then, should you imbue their minds with correct principles! With what sacred fidelity should you put them on their guard against the licentious opinions of the age, against the contagion of evil company, and against the destructive habits of intemperance and sloth! With what devout tenderness should you exhort them, warn them, pray over them, and endeavour to win them, both by precept and example, to the love and fear, as well as to the knowledge of God! O Parents! were these things duly considered, what a revolution should we witness in your mode of treating your children! We should see you more attentive to domestic instruction and discipline, than to the frivolities of a fashionable education. We should see you embracing every opportunity to inculcate on their minds, that virtue is superior to wealth; that holiness is a distinction infinitely more valuable than the magnificence and honours of this world. We should see you, in a word, making their moral and religious culture your chief concern, and studying daily to impress upon their hearts the conviction that, to *fear God, and keep his commandments, is the whole duty* and happiness *of man.*

MAGISTRATES! JURORS! there is a solemn duty incumbent on you in relation to this subject. Can you reconcile, either with your obligations as men, or with the official oath which binds you as public functionaries, the manner in which you are accustomed to treat suicide when called to consider cases of this melancholy crime? Believe me, when you attempt to cover, by a verdict of *lunacy*, the odium which ought ever to rest upon the memory of the deliberate self-murderer, or when you give countenance to such verdicts, you not only wrong your own souls, but you also inflict an injury on society. Say not that, by proclaiming the truth, you would punish not the criminal, but his innocent surviving relatives. Do you forget that this consideration forms one of the moral ties by which most men are, and all men ought to be, bound to the discharge of duty? Execute the law without favour or affection.* Let every member of the community be forewarned by your fidelity, that if he fall into this crime, he will inflict a serious injury on his family and friends, as well as bring ignominy on his own memory; and you will lay another restraint on human wickedness—a restraint which even afflicted relatives must approve—and perhaps save from destruction many an important life.†

My young friends! this subject is entitled to your particular regard. It has been said, and probably with justice, that the young are more apt to fall into the crime of suicide, than those in more advanced age. This consideration should affect and alarm you, and awaken all your vigilance in

* The punishment of suicide prescribed by the common law of England is two-fold—ignominious burial in the high way, with a stake driven through the body—and forfeiture of all the criminal's goods and chattels to the king. The former part of this law continues in force in this State, but is never executed. The latter has been abolished by a particular statute.

† That much may be done to prevent this crime by heaping ignominy upon every *felo de se*, history abundantly testifies. Plutarch tells us, that an unaccountable passion for suicide seized the young women of *Miletus*, from which they could not be deterred by all the tears and entreaties of their friends. But what persuasion and entreaty could not effect, was accomplished by very different means. A decree was issued, " That the body of every young woman who hanged herself, should be dragged naked through the streets, by the same rope with which she had committed the deed." This edict put a complete stop to the extraordinary frenzy. It is also recorded, that in the reign of *Tarquinius Priscus*, some Roman soldiers who were appointed to make drains and common sewers, thinking themselves disgraced by such servile offices, put themselves to death in great numbers. The king ordered the bodies of all the self-murderers to be exposed on crosses, and this put an effectual stop to the practice. *Encyclopædia*, art. *Suicide.*

guarding against every source of danger. The river of life flows troubled and foaming before you; but, inexperienced and sanguine, you cast an eye down the current, overlook its agitations, and fondly hope for a passage uninterruptedly smooth and joyful. Dear inconsiderate youth! be not deceived. Disappointments will occur; vexations will arise; bereavements will cover you with mourning; and various forms of affliction will teach you that this world is, to every child of apostate Adam, a vale of tears. Let me exhort you, then, *to be sober minded;* and to *put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.* In the day of trial, Religion will form your best defence, your firmest support, your richest consolation. From sincere, enlightened, and uniform piety, will flow those inward comforts and joys which are more precious than rubies; as well as that probity, that industry, that temperance, that moderation in worldly aims and pursuits, and that general holiness of life, which form the best guarantee of earthly enjoyment. With this treasure you will be safe, whatever may occur; without it, nothing can render you either safe or happy. Seek, therefore, *first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

Sons and daughters of affliction! in this discussion you have an immediate and peculiar interest. It points out to you your enemies and your defence, your danger and your refuge. To the sanctuary of Religion let me cordially and affectionately invite you. Nothing human can afford you adequate relief; nothing earthly can give you effectual and permanent consolation. Friends may soothe and smile; but they cannot *pour the oil of gladness* into the troubled breast. Property may glitter and decorate; but it cannot cure the wounds of the heart. Honours may dazzle and inflate; but they cannot nourish the hungry soul, they cannot dissipate the clouds of melancholy and despair. Philosophy, falsely so called, may flatter your pride, and allure you by her promises; but her professions are hollow, her promises are vain. The intoxicating draught may give a semblance of relief for a time; but it can only stupify and benumb, and *at last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.* The proud teachers who would persuade you to *curse God and die*, cannot redeem your soul from the abyss of despair, nor give you a drop of water to cool your tongue, in the flames of interminable woe. No, *miserable comforters are they all!* Take refuge, then, in the grace of the Gospel. Come, children of discontent and sorrow! ye who *labour and are heavy laden*, come to the Saviour, and *he will give you rest.* Embrace *the truth as it is in Jesus*, and live under its sanctifying power. Then, instead of flying to the hateful instruments of death, on the approach of calamity, you will have a covenant God and Father, to whose gracious throne you may repair with boldness and affectionate confidence. Then you will possess the privilege, which is the prerogative of the Christian, to *rejoice in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, that maketh not ashamed.* And when death arrives, whether he comes in the form of sudden violence, or wasting disease, he will be a messenger of peace, and introduce you to a kingdom where there is *no more sin, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain;* but where all the *former things are passed away.*

Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever! Amen!

THE END.