

Volume 18

William Huntington

A Correspondence Between Noctua
Aurita, of the Desert, and Philomela, of
the King's Dale

PREFACE

Beloved Friend.

HAVING seen and read most, if not all, the letters which have passed between you and my dear sister, it is my opinion that they would be of great use to many if they were made public. When I consider and reflect upon the light, support, and help, which I received when in my trouble from many of the *Epistles of Faith*, as well as from your other writings; and the many accounts I have since had of the usefulness of the Living Testimonies to many souls that were in distress, darkness, and bondage; it is my request, should it meet with your approbation, that you would publish them. I am fully persuaded that the matter they contain leads to the true and living way. The bulk of professors, in our day, as far as I am able to judge, are entire strangers to the path of regeneration. There are but a few who walk in the narrow path of life, and who experience the love of God therein; and fewer still who can cast up this way before others, and whose ministry is that of the Spirit, and not of the letter. And, as I believe there are some in many dark corners of the country, ready to perish for lack of knowledge, who are seeking the truth, but, for want of some one to guide them, they are kept in ignorance of it, who knows but that Providence may send these letters (as I am certain, from my own knowledge, he has many of your other writings) into their hands; which, under God, may give them light on their state. I think there are in these letters some thing new and singular. I feel a desire to see them in print. I have been acquainted with my friend now for some years. When I first knew her she stood very high in her confidence, such as it was; but, when the Almighty wounded me, and made me speak out of the abundance of my own heart, her

confidence was soon sapped; and I believe she found her confidence had ever been in her own tabernacle; and, when it was rooted up, the king of terrors laid hold of her, as he will one day of many who, like her, think themselves now very secure and strong. But the firstborn of death will soon devour that sort of strength; and hunger-bitten they are already. I have been an eye-witness of her distress under the spirit of bondage, in which she continued two or three years; and, likewise, as you well know, of her happy enlargement, which she enjoyed for a long time. And I have narrowly watched her descent from the mount of transfiguration. She has been now for some time in the furnace; and I believe in my heart she will endure the fire and come forth as gold. At present she walks very steady, humble, meek, and lowly, and appears to quit herself like one who seeth him who is invisible. She is the first fruit of Achaia unto the Lord; at least she was the first that publicly returned to give glory to God; and she was a stranger; and cleansed she is I verily believe. And, as there are many professors now standing where she once stood, and others in darkness and distress through legal bondage, I am in hopes that making the letters public will be a means to awaken some of the former, and encourage the latter. That they may be a caution to some, strength and encouragement to others, stir up jealousy in many, and be blessed to comfort the weak and infant race, is, in this request, the view, ands when published, will be the earnest wish and prayer of

Your truly sincere lover and friend,

VESPERTILIO TUMUIIS.

Preliminary Epistles

To Philomela, in the King's Dale.

Beloved of God,

MAY I not say, Hail! highly favoured, blessed art thou among women, when he that is mighty hath done so great things for thee, in remembrance of his mercy, as he promised to our forefathers in the faith, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever?

It is jubilee with thee; the days of the Son of man are come, days of good things. And would it not be commendable in thee to act the part of the poor lepers in the siege of Samaria; that is, to inform the King's household of it? Dost thou well to feast at the banquet thyself, and to go and hide all the rest? If the Lord forms a person for himself, it is that he may shew forth his praise.

The poor woman with her issue obtained virtue from the Covenant Head privately, and was going to withdraw, in hope of escaping the censure and displeasure of the Jews. With the heart she believed unto righteousness. Thus God prepared her heart; but with the mouth we must make confession unto salvation. This was left undone till God created the fruit of her lips, and then she was called forth to make confession of her faith. By these means the word sounds out, which raises curiosity in some, desires in others, it encourages many, and provokes not a few to jealousy and emulation.

We must render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's. To smuggle foreign goods robs the prince of his revenue; and to hide the heavenly flame under a bushel robs God of his praise. "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." The nine were self-seekers, moved to pray for a temporal cure only; self-interest drove them to it, and base ingratitude kept

them from acknowledging the cure; and, by this art of smuggling the benefit, they escaped the reproach of Christ, which Moses so highly esteemed, and did not lose their reputation among the scribes and pharisees. But, alas! these could have no faith; for "How can you believe," saith the Saviour, "who receive honour one of another, and not the honour that cometh from God only?" We are to weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice. I was in company with his excellency the Welsh ambassador at your groaning, when your bearing pains and birth throes were upon you; and we both took a part of your burden; and I am informed that you felt the spirit of heaviness get lighter upon you from that hour. But where is my part of the caudle? I travailed in birth again and again till Christ was formed in thee. And now this work is done; but what account have I had of it? and, therefore, how can I rejoice? Ephraim is comforted; but there is a promise of comfort to his mourners. And again: "Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters; behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their ways and their doings, and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem; and they shall comfort you when ye see their ways and their doings." Where is my share of this promise? This part of the price is withheld.

The comforts of hope, the testimony of a good conscience, and the pleasing accounts of God's giving testimony to the word of his grace, is the promised reward of the labourers in the Lord's vineyard, and is no small part of the penny a day. If I might intrude upon a little of thy time, I should be glad of some short account of thy calamity when we fell into company at the G____; and how thou earnest into that deplorable state. No small portion of furnace-work has fallen to my share. And, when I saw the anguish of thy soul, I never found myself more sensibly touched with the grief of any person: nor did I ever feel a fuller persuasion in my mind of any person's

deliverance, nor more freedom and confidence to predict it, and in the strongest terms; and I plainly saw, at your departure, that neither Satan, infidelity, no, nor your carnal reason, could stand before it; so mightily grows the word of the Lord and prevails. I must confess that, when I heard of thy happy delivery under the ministry of my dearly beloved and most faithful brother in the Lord, I stood astonished at the goodness of God, and at the concurring providences which went before on thy behalf. One friend in our company could not settle his business to return to London with me till Saturday morning. Saturday is a day that I am never from my study, if I can possibly help it. One or two in company pressed me not a little to stay; and those at G_____ most kindly invited me to come and visit them, where it pleased God that we were to meet with you, whom I never saw before to my knowledge. And surely God set before us an open door. Our mouths were wonderfully opened to you; and I think your heart was, in some measure, opened to us. And this greatly convinced me that my stay was of God; nor could conscience contradict it; nor was my cruse empty on the Lord's day following on account of it. The favour that I have to crave is, how the troubles came upon thee, and how long thou was left to occupy business in those deep waters; and whether thou wast in a profession previous to those trials or not? Now, as I am engaged in the work of the Lord, and desirous of knowing the wonders that God does in the land, that I may bless him with thee, I hope thou wilt not take this liberty amiss, seeing thou art no more a stranger nor a foreigner, out a fellow-citizen of the saints, and of the household of God; and that thou mayest long enjoy the pleasures, privileges, and communities, of that city, is the earnest prayer of,

Dear sister,

Thine affectionate brother in Christ Jesus,

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita

Preliminary Epistles

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert

Dear Friend,

I HAVE attempted, as the Lord has enabled me, to comply with your request, in giving you some particulars respecting the good work the Lord has been pleased to work in my soul under the ministry of his Majesty's herald, now with us. I think it is more than three years ago that I first heard him preach a sermon from these words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." He gave such a description of the way that most professors entered into the loun, as quite astonished me. I could hardly credit it; but was not then left to contradict it; but I believed it could not touch me I thought it did me some good, as it led my heart out in gratitude to God that he had not left me to make such an entrance, for I was just in the state of the Laodicean church, thought myself rich and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing; but knew not that I was poor and wretched, miserable, blind, and naked. Had he asked me, at that time, of my experience, I should have told him that I had been on the mount of transfiguration with Peter, and in the third heaven with Paul.

I heard him for some time occasionally on Sabbath-day evenings. But he asserted such strange things respecting the first work of the Spirit's operation on a sinner's heart, when he came to convince him of sin, as was point-blank against my experience; therefore I thought I was a witness against him

that he was wrong. His once asserting, that when the Spirit came to convict a sinner, and to convince him of unbelief, that such a soul could apply none of the promises of the gospel, this quite enraged me, and I declared I would never hear him preach another sermon I therefore left his ministry for, I believe, two or three months; during which time I found a great deal of enmity work against him, and his ministry too. However, conscience was not altogether silent at this time; and I should at times, have such thoughts as these, viz. Where does all this enmity spring from? It cannot be a fruit of the Spirit of God. However, these words of Paul used to set matters right at times: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." That I had the faith which is of the operation of God's Spirit, I believed no one that knew me doubted; but feeling this enmity rise high at times made me a little uneasy, and I thought I would hear him again, as he might be got more moderate. I had heard him but a few times before the Lord was pleased to strip me of all my supposed excellency. How true is that saying of the Psalmist, "When thou with thy rebukes correctest man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to assume like the moth." And so I found it. And I soon found the faith that I had so much boasted of to be nothing but bold presumption. God sent the killing commandment home to my conscience, which stirred up all the nest of uncleanness that lay hid in my heart before, and I could only view an angry God in a fiery law; and a dreadful sight it was to me; it made me, like Moses, to fear and quake. Here was no access to God. The flaming sword seemed to turn every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. Instead of faith, hope, joy, and peace, I felt my carnal mind was nothing but enmity against God. My heart was as hard as an adamant; my will was pregnant with nothing but stubbornness, perverseness, and rebellion; and, as to my affections, I knew not where they were; but I knew they were not fixed on God, where they ought to be. Pray I could not. I had no faith; and God's word declares that

whatever is not at faith is sin, and that the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. This made me almost distracted. Every sermon I heard from him cut and condemned me; and the more it did so, the more I was riveted both to him and his preaching. I longed for the return of the Sabbath, that I might be tried and searched. I was now determined to leave the place I was joined to as a member, and attend his ministry on Sabbath mornings, as what I heard at the old place my soul could not endure; it was like singing songs to a heavy heart. How my soul loathed that daubing with untempered mortar! that peace which was spoken to my soul when God had spoken no peace! Blessed, for ever blessed be the Lord, who has delivered me from that empty profession, from that snare of the fowler. It was indeed sovereign mercy that delivered me from falling into that ditch, where the blind are leading the blind; and I was as blind as any one that is left behind, and perhaps far more presumptuous. Pardon this digression, dear sir, for Christ's love had just touched the handle of the lock, which made me thus wander. But to return. I went on so, I think about a year, groaning under this heavy burden. I could not unbosom myself fully to any one. I sometimes accidentally fell into the herald's company at the G____; and, as I wished much to have some conversation with him, I pressed him to favour me with a visit; and he said he would, which raised my expectation of having an opportunity to open my mind to him. But I believe it was a year after his first invitation before he came, which I assure you tried me not a little. The first time he called I could not persuade him to get off his horse. This distressed me much, and I concluded that no one cared for my soul, and so gave up all thoughts of ever having an opportunity of speaking to him, unless I went to him on purpose; and that I feared would be deemed too great a freedom; and, besides, I was afraid that I should not be able to make him to understand me, nor be able to point my case out so bad as it really was; and, should that be the case, I

should be deprived of receiving a faithful sentence from his mouth. I believe he read my condemnation in my face, which used to make me tremble from head to foot. When I saw him come down from the pulpit stairs I thought he looked at me as if he wished I would never enter the chapel more. I think it was about a month after this, one Sabbath morning, he had been cutting and condemning me till I thought I was almost in the bottomless pit. I could no longer refrain, and therefore went to him into the vestry. He received me kindly, and gave me liberty to tell him all I wished; and, to my great surprise, he told me he really believed the Lord had begun a work on my soul, and that the Spirit of God was leading me to a sight and sense of my state by nature, and giving me to see that without Christ I could do nothing. What I felt at hearing this I cannot express; it was like life from the dead. I did not lose my burden, but I felt a gleam of hope from this consideration, that, if it was the Lord's work, I was not beyond the reach of mercy. I could, from this time, tell him my whole heart and soul without any reserve; and he was the only person to whom I could. And many words has he spoken to me in private which have helped me with a little help when I have thought I was near upon the borders of despair. He once preached from these words in Malachi: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye shall seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall surely come, saith the Lord of Hosts." Under this sermon I seemed to have a glimpse of the person of Christ. I could not tell what it was then. I think it had some effect in attracting my affections, for I lost my burden for several days; and, though it was not attended with any appropriating faith, yet it produced a joy in my soul which I had not felt before. I nursed this frame till I lost it, and my burden returned heavier than ever Yet I cannot help thinking but that was the season that Christ knit my affections to himself; and it was the only season of real joy that I ever experienced till the Lord was pleased to break my

fetters. As I before observed, my burden got heavier; and I found worldly cares got such hold of my mind that I was bowed down under them. My memory could retain nothing but what was against me. If I attempted to read but a chapter in the Bible, my thoughts were like the fool's eyes, wandering to the ends of the earth. If I attended the word preached, it was the same. And, though I was taught, by bitter experience, something of the importance of the truths I heard, yet, if I attempted to pray, though I knew I must perish everlastingly if the Lord did not give me the things I felt my need of, yet here worldly cares would so crowd into my mind that I have forgot what I came to God for. This I thought was a black mark indeed; this made my burden intolerable. His ministry still cut me off in the matter of faith. He would describe all I felt; and sometimes, under the word, I would have a little gleam of light to see something of the Spirit's work, which would give me a little hope that I was in the footsteps of the flock. But he was sure not to leave the pulpit till he had positively asserted that in such a soul, under those feelings, there was faith; which was like striking me dead; for I was well convinced I was quite destitute of that precious grace; and these two passages of scripture were to me quite a confirmation of it. The first is the words of Christ himself, when he says to his disciples, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and it should be done." The mountain I conceived to be unbelief. The Saviour says the mustard seed is the least of all seeds; and I drew this inference from it, that if I had the least degree of faith in my heart, I should not be held so first under its power. The other passage is, what John says in one of his epistles: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." But, with respect to my knowing any thing of this victory, my conscience bore witness that worldly cares so captivated my thoughts, that I could not keep them where I wished them to be for one minute. What it was which kept me from black despair I know not. All the hope I had was this:

when I had a gleam of light to see that the path I was in had been trodden by many who had received pardon and peace in times past, then I thought perhaps God might save me. But then I knew not but that this hope might be cut off; and, should this take place, I must be lost for ever And I lived in daily expectation that this would be the case. At times I should find my burden get lighter; at least, I should feel myself more insensible of it. Then I thought I was in a worse situation than before; and I sought for it as if it had been my chiefest treasure; though I knew, when I had it, it almost made me distracted. I laboured long under a sharp temptation, and was saying, like one of old," I choose strangling rather than life." Any instrument of death I could not bear in my sight; and was afraid I should be left to be my own executioner. The Lord still held me up to the light, and to a sight of his justice and sovereignty; and I saw clearly that he would be just if he condemned me, and would be glorified in doing it, for I had procured it all to myself; and that my mouth would be for ever stopped, for I was under a threefold condemnation; condemned by the law, condemned by the gospel, and by my own conscience. But here I felt it cut closest; the thoughts of being condemned by the gospel, which is in itself good news and glad tidings, and in which is revealed a Saviour, who I saw was every way sufficient and able to save me. But it all rested on the act of his sovereign will; and whether that act would be put forth in mercy or in justice, I knew not Here all legal hopes are cut; no bottom in this dungeon. And this was the place where sovereign mercy took me up. About this time, God, in his kind providence, sent you down to the King's dale. You were, by appointment, to spend a day at the G____, and I was invited to meet you there. My case, at that time, seemed to be desperate. I had been for some time in great fear for losing my rationality, and was sure it must take place, if God did not appear for me; and then I thought I should be left to curse and blaspheme all that was good. This cut me to the quick. I was truly miserable, and thought myself not fit for the

society of any that feared the Lord. I thought, if they did but know my heart, they would spurn me, and especially such an old servant of the Lord as I conceived you to be; for which reason I had a deal of pro and con in my mind that morning whether to go or not. I wanted to hear your conversation, and others whom I knew were to be there; and glad should I be could I have been shut in a closet for that purpose. However, I at last concluded to go, but with this resolution, that I would by no means whatever open my mouth. You were almost a stranger to me, I having never been in your company but once before, nor never had any conversation with you. When I came I found you there, with several others, at dinner, and I was placed next to you. Even this circumstance made my heart ready to burst within me. O, thought I, did you but know what a wretch I am, you would not endure me so near you! I did try to hide my face with my bonnet as much as I could. But you had not sat many minutes at dinner before you related a circumstance of a woman who was brought under convictions by your ministry, and who at last was quite deprived of her rationality, and was put into a madhouse; and her husband said to you, "You always said it was the work of God on her soul; but what can you say now?" You said to him in answer, "And so I do now; and I believe, in God's time, she will be brought to her right mind." This account was, indeed, like fuel to that fiery temptation I was then under; and no sooner was the word out of your mouth, than my sensations were such as I cannot describe. I thought I even seemed as if I felt my senses going from me. At this time, if I had all the world given me, I could not have helped bursting into tears; they came indeed from the abundant grief of my heart. You observed me, and turned to me very quick, and said to me, "What do you weep for? Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." I answered, "If you knew my state, and what a wretch I am, you would not say so to me." You turned to me again, and said, "What do you cry for?" I made no answer, being determined, if possible, to keep my resolution. You repeated it several times,

but could draw no more from me, till his Majesty's herald, who was present, said, "Sir, let her alone; perhaps she will tell you what the matter is by and by." You then left noticing me, and related a circumstance of a young woman who for some time had attended your ministry, and who was brought into great distress of soul; one who, I found, frequently visited you; and that she came to you one day, and said, "I am come to visit you for the last time, as it is of no use; all is over with me; there is no hope for me, I am certainly lost; I have neither strength nor power left, and sink I must." You said to her, "Well, girl, I see now your strength is gone, and you are brought to the place of promised deliverance; the work of stripping is done, there is nothing left; and I shall soon see you again with a new song in your mouth." These are the words, as near as they are brought to my recollection at this time. She went from you, and I think, if I am not mistaken, it was but a few days after, as she was attending your ministry, that the Lord appeared for her, burst her bonds, and delivered her soul; and the next time you saw her she told you a better tale, as you had predicted. This account took off the edge of those feelings which were communicated by the other relation, as I thought I saw a near resemblance between her condition and mine. When you had related this, you turned to me again, and asked me the same question as before, to tell you what was the matter with me. I did then open my mouth, and told you it was on account of the hardness and rebellion I felt in my heart. You then ordered a glass of beer, and one for me, and said, "Come, you and I will drink together." You asked me what I would drink to you. I answered, "I can drink my kind love to you." You said, "Can you from your heart?" I said, "Yes." You said, "What can you love me for? It must be for something of God which you find in me; for no soul can love me for God's sake, unless they are loved of God; for we are to be hated of all men for his name's sake." And you added, "As sure as the Lord liveth, so sure shall you and I sit down together in the kingdom of heaven." That you should

Speak in such positive language to me, was very strange; neither could I credit you then. You then entered into conversation with me, and told me all my feelings, as if you had been privy to all that had passed in my heart for three years back; and even some particular things which I had been exercised with but a few days before, which I knew none could know but God and myself; and which I had not mentioned even to the King's herald; therefore I knew you could have no information of them from him. You came to me that day, as Christ came to the woman of Samaria, and told me all things that ever I did. And sent of God you was, I am well persuaded, by the blessed effects that followed. You had your commission from God to strengthen the weak hands, and to confirm the feeble knees; for my soul was refreshed; and I received a confidence at that time that God would appear for me; nor did I ever sink so low afterwards; and it was but a month after this that God was pleased to appear and deliver my soul. You said unto me, "You shall not die in the pit, for in the pit I know you are." I shall never forget this interview, nor the effects of it, as long as I have an existence.

When the Lord saw that my strength was gone, and that there was none shut up or left, then he graciously appeared for me, and made the ministry of his excellency, by which I was alarmed and pulled down, the means of bringing me forth into the light and liberty of the children of God. The sermon was preached from these words: "Thou hast chastened me sore, but thou hast not given me over unto death." The Lord wrought faith in my heart, by that discourse, to believe in the dear Redeemer; and faith brought such joy into my soul as a stranger intermeddled not with. I could now say, with David, that God had turned my mourning into dancing, and had taken off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness. And I really think, when I get to glory, that I shall sing the loudest of redeeming love and sovereign grace of any there. I must adopt, as my own, the language of Mr. Hart:

That sinners, black as hell, by Christ
Are sav'd, I know full well;
For I his mercy have not miss'd,
And I'm as black as hell.

I have sent you more than I intended when I sat down to write. But I believe every fact was brought to my mind by that blessed Spirit under whose operations they were wrought in my soul. Therefore I did not think that I should do right if I suppressed any part. I hope the homely dress in which it appears will not obscure it, so as to make it unintelligible. I believe you will find it out, as you have travelled the same path before I was brought into it. I present it to you with this request, that I may have an interest in your prayers, that the Lord would perfect that which is still lacking in my faith, and continue to work in me to will and to do of his own good pleasure; that I may be helped to deny self, and to take up the cross daily. And may the Lord long spare you to be useful in his vineyard, that you may daily see the fruit of your labours in espousing souls to Christ, which shall appear the crown of your joy and rejoicing in the great day, when you shall say, "Here am I and the children which thou hast given me." This is the humble and earnest prayer of

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Preliminary Epistles

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

AS I have heard that thou wast long in a profession before it pleased God, by the mouth of his herald, to pull thee down and renew thee, I should like, if it be not too great a favour, to know how that first work began. I know that God's work is

perfect, and that nothing can be added to it, or taken from it; and that God doth it that men may fear before him. But sometimes the work hath small beginnings, and goes on almost imperceptibly, the impressions not being deep, as in Job and Hezekiah, who, after a long profession, were led into awful discoveries of their own depravity, and who afterwards were favoured with more conspicuous deliverances, and with brighter views of God's great salvation, and of their interest in it. I should like to know whether you had any sight or sense of the plague of your own heart, the natural hardness and impenitency of it, the infidelity, the rebellion, and carnal enmity of it; and if you were exercised with legal bondage, the wrath of God, and the terrors of a broken law; the fear of death, and the torments which attend it; all of which the saints in the Bible complain much about. And, indeed, how can those be made free who are insensible of their bonds? or those need the physician who are not sick; or those be reconciled who never felt their enmity? or those receive the love of God who have neither fear nor torment to cast out? No small number who stand high in their profession are ignorant of all these things; and sure I am that the office and appointment of Christ doth not reach them, for he was not sent to feed the full, to heal the whole, to support the strong, nor to call the righteous. He was sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to open the prison to those that were bound, &c. They toll us that they were drawn by love; but all that God loves he rebukes and chastens, and scourges every son whom he receiveth; and declares that those who have no chastisement are bastards and not sons. A reply to this will greatly oblige,

Dear sister,

Your willing servant in Christ,

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Preliminary Epistles

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

I RECEIVED your kind epistle, and do most sincerely thank you for the same, and shall comply with your request, for I feel a pleasure in so doing; and should I give too much scope to my pen, I hope you will pardon it. To proceed. My parents being professors of religion, I was early brought to attend on the word preached, under the Rev. D_____ B_____. He being a Calvinist dissenter, and I believe he preached the doctrines of the gospel clearly, I sat under him till I was in my twentieth year; but it was from constraint, and not out of any love to it. But during all these years I attained to no degree of knowledge of the doctrines I heard; and I believe that the heathens, who never saw a Bible nor heard the word, could not be more blind and ignorant than I was.

But, at the end of this period of time, one Lord's day Mr. B_____ . preached from these words, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help." As he went on treating of the first part, I found my attention drawn to it, and saw that I was interested in the subject; and I do believe there never was a truer description given of the fall of man, as far as it could be conveyed from light received from the Letter of the word, than he gave at that time: it made me tremble from head to foot. I believed the report; and clearly did he shew how fallen man was under the curse of the law, and, as such, obnoxious to the wrath 1329 of God; and conscience made the application by bearing this testimony, "Thou art the man." He then treated largely on free grace, and salvation by Christ, and shewed that it was only for sinners that Christ died, and that this salvation became ours by believing. I shall not enlarge on his sermon, but tell you that these last tidings made my very heart leap for joy. I thought, yea, I had not a doubt, but I was one of those that Christ died for, because I

now saw myself a sinner. On this ground I commenced a believer; and I came from under the sermon with light on the whole plan of salvation, and as firm a confidence of my own personal interest therein as a poor creature could have. For two nights I could not close my eyes, my joys did rise so high; and all the free invitations and unconditional promises of the gospel kept flowing into my mind. I thought I was in a new world; the world was now nothing to me, and I wanted to die, that I might be out of it. I could not pay the least attention to any worldly affairs for three weeks. I once went to Mr. B____, and told him how his ministry had been blessed to me, and we rejoiced together; and my wonderful conversion was blazed abroad far and near. I sat under his ministry, I think, about six years.

My joys at length were not quite so high. After the time mentioned above they began to abate, which I thought to be strange; but I went to my father, and told him how it was with me, and he told me that all those who were walking in the ways of God found it so, and I should only maintain and keep my comfort in a way of religion. Indeed he was a good nurse to me, and very high I was in his esteem, but not more so than he was in mine. I had no small share of joy, at seasons, for the space of a year and a half. About this time these words were brought suddenly to my mind, and that with power: "And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." I was much perplexed at this, and thought what rod had I got to pass under? And I thought I was safe enough in the bond of the covenant already. However, about six months after this I was visited with severe afflictions, which so weakened my tabernacle, and the faculties of my soul, that at times I was incapable of thinking, contemplating, or any thing else. But this I conjectured to be the fulfilment of the first part of the foregoing promise which the Lord sent to me. From that time my joys declined; but my confidence still remained unshaken as to the reality of the work. At times I

can recollect that there was something within me that would whisper that all was not right at the bottom. But this voice was soon hushed and smothered, by being attributed to other causes, viz. the devil and the power of unbelief, which I was taught to resist. Indeed, I had so many to build me up in this my confidence, that it was no wonder I stood my ground; and I had as high an opinion of myself as others had of me. which only fed my pride. Having sat under the aforesaid instrument about six years, he left his charge to take another; and in his stead came the Rev. G_____ T_____. He was, to my view, as sound in the doctrines of the gospel as the other, and I much approved of his ministry, and sat under it, I think, about four years. At this time I married, and providence fixed my habitation in this place, where I sat under the ministry of J_____ M_____, and was much delighted with the same; as he was not inferior to him I left. After some time I heard that Mr. Jenkins preached in a very singular way; but as I heard he preached the doctrines of the gospel, I thought I would go and hear him; for I assure you from these I never deviated in judgment, for all my religion lay in the belief of them. But I now know that my religion would not stand the fiery test. But sure, if it had been God's genuine work, it could not have been overthrown; for what he does is done for ever. But a stormy wind has rent this wall; and when it fell there was not left so much as one stone upon another that was not thrown down. O Sir! to think how many that are called shepherds, and whole flocks under them, are resting short of the things that accompany salvation, is a sore trial to me. But I must leave this part of the Saviour's government with him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working; but cannot get rid of my feelings for those who are so near to me. Adieu; and may God reward your kindness to the chiefest of all sinners. So prays

Yours, in the hope of the gospel,

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Preliminary Epistles

To Philomela in the King's Dale

Dear Sister in Christ,

Yours came safe to hand; and I have considered it, and I will by no means say that the Lord God of Israel had no hand in the work described in your narrative. But this I must confess, that evangelical repentance, which to my view is essential to salvation, is not in the account. The new wine was put into an old bottle; and, where this is the case, pride will burst the bottle, and the wine will run out, and the old bottle must perish. I mean, that your joys were not received into an humble, broken, and contrite heart. God hath promised to give us a new heart, as well as a new spirit; and, when the new wine is put into a new bottle, both are preserved. However, the stony heart shall be taken away, and it shall be destroyed, as well as the other parts of the body of sins, for our old man was crucified with Christ; and, under the operation of the Spirit's renewing power, the body of sins shall be put off.

Repentance is twofold; legal and evangelical. The former is extorted by fears, terror, and torment, and is always attended with hard thoughts of God, and self-pity. This is all the repentance that can be produced in us under the law, where we have nothing before our eyes but our own sins, and a sin-avenging God. Evangelical repentance is drawn forth and flows out under the sweet operations of pardoning love, and is attended with a believing view of him whom we have pierced, and with mourning for him; and this is accompanied with a justifying of God, and sympathizing with and condoling

a suffering Saviour, and with self-abhorrence: and so it is written, "From all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and then ye shall remember your own evil ways, which were not good; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities when I am pacified toward you." God appearing pacified, and we filled with self-loathing, is the finishing work when God brings a soul into covenant with him. He accepts us in the beloved; the atonement applied purges us from our filthiness; and God shines pacified, reconciled, and well pleased in the face of Jesus Christ. All repentance but this needs to be repented of, but this never does; for Christ is exalted to give this repentance to Israel, and the forgiveness of sins; and this repentance is unto life, and is attended with purifying faith. The very text that was sent to you informed you that the humbling rod, and the bond of the covenant, were wanting in your experience. The rod of God is smiting us with terrors, horrors, flashes of divine anger, reproofs, rebukes, the lashes of conscience, bitter reflections, and smiting us with the application of the threatenings and sentence of a broken law, and with the sore buffetings of Satan, and the killing stings and remorse of guilt. To come into the bond of the covenant is to have the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us. The work on you seems to me to be very much like that of Hezekiah, much joy and confidence. And no wonder; for at that time he knew nothing of the plague of his own heart; but, when God shewed him this, his joy, confidence, and hopes, all sunk together: "I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world: he will cut me off with pining sickness; from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me," Isa. xxxviii. 11, 12. And, indeed, nothing will hide pride from our eyes but an abiding sense of our own depravity, and of the super-abounding and undeserved mercy of God in

Christ Jesus to us. May this religion ever rest with thee and me. So prays

Thy friend and servant in Christ Jesus,
The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter I

To Philomela, on the Spray, Mount Tabor.

THE long, cold, dreary winter of my beloved sister in God is past; the dismal cloud of Mount Sinai, which hath long rained its entangling snares on thy soul, is now over and gone; the hiding place from the impending storms, and the covert from the dreadful tempest, is found at last; being wet with the showers of the mountains, she hath embraced the rock for want of a shelter. He was angry with me, says Philomela; but his anger is turned away, and he comforts me. "In his favour is life. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." Israel buds and blossoms as the rose; the lilies of the valley appear among the thorns; those that have long lain self-condemned, among the pots and potsherds of the earth, obtain the wings of a dove, and their feathers shine with burnished gold, while the voice of the turtle bemoans his mate. Nor will he deliver the soul of his turtle dove unto the multitude of the wicked, nor forget the congregation of his poor for ever, Psalm lxxiv. 19. Two turtle doves were always offered together under the old dispensation; but one was never offered alone. Jesus died not alone; we were crucified with him. How precious is the sacrifice of a crucified Saviour to poor perishing sinners! And how precious is the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart to Christ Jesus! These were both offered up, and they will ever go together; as in type, so in truth. The voice of the heavenly turtle is heard and understood; and his approving and commanding voice to his mate is, "O my dove, that art in the cleft of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs! Let me see thy countenance; let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice,

and thy countenance is comely." Love in the heart ravishes him, and truth on the tongue charms his blessed ears; while a cheerful countenance, reflected from a joyful conscience, carries all before it, and holds him a willing and a joyful captive to the charms of a mortal's affections: "The King is held in the galleries." How humbling, how condescending, is the King of kings, and Lord of lords, to bow the heavens and come down to manifest himself, and pay his divine visits to rebels, to criminals in chains, who are shut up in unbelief, in legal bondage, and in the strong holds of sin and Satan! But he comes; and "his reward is with him, and his work before him." He enters and takes possession of the purchase of his own blood, and rejoices over the trophy of his own victory; separates the objects of his choice from among the rest of the captives, and espouses the foreigner. What a brilliant train of glory, majesty, and power, attend him when the everlasting doors are lifted up, and the King of glory enters in! Then we bow to his sceptre, submit to his easy yoke, embrace the heavenly proclamation, and with joy unspeakable, come over to the divine standard; while the banner, that he has given to them that fear him, is displayed, that his beloved may be delivered from that fear and torment that is more bitter than death. How wonderful are his works to the children of men! The clay lies passive in the hand of the potter, while he forms the broken pitcher into another vessel, as it seemeth good unto the potter to make it. He enlightens the understanding to behold his beauty, suitableness, and worth; he renews the mind, writes the law of faith in it, and entertains it with heavenly things; he binds up the broken heart, and sheds abroad his love in it; he purges the conscience, and endows it with everlasting peace, and, the witness of our adoption; he informs the judgment, and inclines the will to choose, embrace, and hold fast, the better part, that cannot be taken from us. Truth in the love of it, flows in, and the promises flow in with their richest blessings, in all their sweetness, power, love, and joy unspeakable; while the blessed and adorable

Comforter opens them up, explains them, and applies them as nails fastened by the Master of assemblies. He also helps our infirmities in prayer, testifies of Jesus, and of our interest in him, and fills both heart and mouth with a thousand thanks, blessings, and praises. "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise."

O could we continue in this mount without the company of Moses and Elias! This would be heaven on earth. But how often is this sweet enjoyment of his company interrupted. So fearful is the soul of offending, lest he should awake and depart; what weeping, praying, cleaving, and struggling to hold fast, when he is about to withdraw; and what tormenting anxiety, when gone, for fear he should return no more! Then comes that wicked counsellor, that enemy of all righteousness, with a "Where is now thy God?" But he returns again and again, according to his appointed times of life, and revives and renews his visits and his work, saying, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee; in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy redeemer." So speaks the great Jehovah; so sings Philomela; so I must subscribe.

But the arch enemy will lay many traps for thee in thy new and glorious connexion, in thine exalted state, and in the happy enjoyment of that dignity to which thou art so unexpectedly preferred. And, as thou hast been so long habituated to the legal embraces of Moses, thou wilt find a self-righteous spirit within, that will at all times bend thee that way; and there will be a cleaving to him, notwithstanding all the hard treatment thou hast met with from him. His first wife was a Cushite, or Ethiopian; and all are black, but none comely, to this day. That are wedded to him. Contending, finding fault, cursing, and accusing, are all that can be expected by those who sue not out a divorce from him. His embraces gender nothing but

bondage to fear; and all conception by him is followed with endless soul-travail and fruitless labour; and the whole issue is fruit unto death, and nothing else.

No wedding garment, no ring, no beautiful feet with shoes, ornament those who abide by the side of that husband. "A bloody husband art thou unto me," says the Cushite," because of the circumcision." Then she is sent back; and how long she remained in widowhood I know not. However, her father brought her to him again in the wildest; for I do not read that he 'ever went after her himself; and what became of her afterwards, none know. I think he starved her to death: for Moses gave them not the true bread from heaven; they ate manna, and are dead, John, vi. 32, 49. And I think that he hath starved all the wives that he hath had since; and, if at any time he gets a little comfort in his own heart, which makes him appear with a bright and cheerful countenance, he is sure to put a veil over his face, that nobody may look to the end of it but himself, 2 Cor. iii. 13. There is no such thing as living with him, nor with, any of his family. What a life had our poor venerable mother Sarah all the time that Hagar was in her tent. She wanted to be the princess, though she was in bonds; and expected that her spurious son would have been heir both of the promises and of the homestall, till, by an order from the higher powers, they were both banished from the pavilion, which was to be inhabited by the legitimate offspring of the free woman. But, notwithstanding all that I have said, thou wilt get into these legal embraces, veiled, blinded, bound, straitened, barren, lifeless, peevish, fretful, rebellious, hardened; yea, and thou wilt even cleave to these things, as soon as ever the best beloved hides his face, withdraws, and provokes thee to jealousy, in order to try thy love, thy faithfulness, and thine attachment to him; not that he may know how thou wilt behave, but that thou mayest know what he hath done for thee; and that, by his going and coming, by his absence and his presence, thou mayest come to a more

perfect knowledge of him, and at a more familiar acquaintance with him. At his departure the old man will shew his head; and when the Lord visits thee he will creep into his holes; for he is truly a night-bird. He cannot endure the light, nor shew his head where divine consolations abound. But, as soon as ever the good man takes his bag of money with him, and withdraws from his spouse, then the owls, bats, and evening wolves, creep forth; but, when the sun arises, they lay themselves down in their dens. At such times we must pray, watch, wait, and look, even from the lions dens, and from the mountains of the leopards; for at these seasons the legal spirit works in a very unobserved way. The soul sensibly feels its loss; its love, joy, and comfort, abated. Consequently it doth not perceive the Lord, as usual, working in it both to will and to do. What is it then? Why, if he be not working in us, we must work for him. Then corruptions rise up, and interrupt us in the performance of our task. At this anger rises; then conscience accuses; then unbelief prevails, and hardness of heart and rebellion follow; and the wrath and the bondage of the law come on, and hold fast; and we are discontented, and fret at every thing, even against the Lord himself. The more discontented we are, in our deserted state, the more we strive, being driven with a hasty spirit; and the more we strive, the faster we are bound; till the light of his blessed countenance darts another healing ray, and the voice of peace rebukes and becalms the storm. Then the Lord returns with double love, and we dissolve in double gratitude. Now Moses holds his peace, and is content. The lion sculks off to his thicket, and the old man faints and dies once more, while we look to the cross. The nails pierce him, the spear lays at him, the cancelled debt-book silences him, and God, shining reconciled in the face of Christ, banishes him. Our old man is crucified with him: but crucifixion is a long lingering death, and the old man dies hard. He is of the same lineage, and in the same state, as the devil his father; both are condemned, both cursed, both are destroyed; and yet both are in being, and we know it to our

sorrow. God was with Judah, and they drove the Canaanites out of the mountains; but they could not drive them out of the valleys, because they had chariots of iron, Judges, i. 19. To keep them out of the mind and affections is a great thing; but to root them out of the heart is a work not to be done till we engage the last enemy; I mean death; for, though there is no discharge from that war, yet there will be a full discharge when that war is over; and then there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts. This encounter completes the victory, and the crown awaits the conquerors. Sin and death entered the first paradise, but both shall be debarred the second. The first Adam let them in, and the last Adam shall drive them out. O long-looked-for, blessed and happy day, when and where the inhabitants shall no more say, I am sick! Where sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Where we shall see the lustre of a million suns, who shall shine on us, and shine through us, and with all his fullness satisfy us, and that for ever and ever. So prays

Thy ready servitor,

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter II

To Noctua Aurita, of the Desert.

I RECEIVED your very kind Letter; and may the Lord reward your labour of love to me, one of the most unworthy creatures that ever the Lord condescended to work upon. All that you tell me, concerning what are the effects of cleaving to Moses, I have found in my own experience, in the course of two months before my journey to Gasson's Bower. It is a mystery to me how I got there. But the Lord blessed the conversation I had with you the morning we all walked in the fields together, and gave me light to see how I was entangled; and I believe Satan will never bring me into that snare again. He must come in a different way the next time, if ever he gets me there again; which God in his mercy prevent! However, I am not at that mount now, and dread the thoughts of ever going there again. I know the Lord sent you to Gasson's Bower, and me too. It was a happy season to my soul, for the Lord was with us. If you recollect, I told you a dream I had had, which I was sure was from the Lord. What was most remarkable in the dream, the Sabbath-day's portion, that you said to me, in my dream, I should enjoy; and I dreamt that you tried to encourage and to comfort me under the sore trial I was then in. It was above ten days before you came down that I had the dream. I knew I had lost what was dearer to me than all the world; I mean that nearness to God, and communion with him, which I had once enjoyed. But the other part of my dream was something I was expecting the enjoyment of; and my expectation has not been cut off, as you will see by what I will relate to you. I had not set out on my journey to Gasson's Bower one hour before I felt such a spirit of uniting love flow into my heart to those that were with me, and to those I expected to meet: as I have not words to express; and your

sermon that evening in the barn was a seal and confirmation of all that I had felt. It was the new commandment indeed, written with the finger of God on my heart. And as I said before, a happy season I had. Moses bands began to burst, for I could be holden no longer with them; and from Elijah's caw in the wilderness I was brought, and God has put me into the cleft of the rock, the sweet place you told me of. I find it is a sweet place; for he is making all his goodness to pass before me, and proclaiming his name to be merciful and gracious, &c.; and what I now enjoy can be nothing less than an earnest of that rest in endless glory, which the Sabbath-day is a type of. And therefore the words which you told me in my dream are fulfilled; for I do enjoy" a Sabbath-day's portion." The Lord is pouring down such a blessing, that there is not room to receive it. I want my coast enlarged. Jabez prayed for it, and had it; and, my dear friend, do ask it for me; for I must be enlarged, or die under it, and that God knows. Surely this is singing in the heights of Zion, and feeding on the high places. I hope the Lord will never remove me from this cleft of the rock till he takes down this clay tabernacle, which I feel to be such a clog as I never felt it before. What I enjoy is something more than faith and hope, though these abide; but it is the greatest of all, which is charity, or love. But, though it is thus with me, I know that Satan is very near to me, and would deprive me of all, if he could. I feel such fiery darts from him, at times, as I have never experienced before. But he is not permitted to hurt me. Christ was manifested in the flesh to destroy the works of the devil. I did grieve sadly at something you said in your Letter; it was this; your saying I should be at the old work of cleaving to Moses again and again. But I shall certainly die to him and his law; and that has been predicted to me in another dream, which I had the night before last. It was this: I dreamed I was from home in a friend's house. A person came in to me, and told me I was dead, and wanted me to go with him to see my corpse, which was at a house a little distance off. I was moved with indignation against him,

and told him I was heartily glad I was dead, for I had plague enough of myself all my life-time, and would not move one step to view my own corpse; and that any body might have the trouble of my funeral that pleased. Perhaps this will be fulfilled when I can say, with Paul, "I, through the law, am I end to the law." Pardon my troubling you so much about dreams; for, when I write to you, I can write only what I feel. I hope we shall see you soon. I have every indulgence heart can wish; I mean that of attending on his majesty's heralds, whose glorious orations are remarkably blessed to me. Surely "the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage." I assure you, when we all get together we talk much about you. I know we all feel much soul-union to you. Pray remember our little sister Moorhen; you know she has no breasts. She has received your kind epistle, and thanks you for it; but she wonders how you found out her case, as she never has told you. I must now conclude, hoping to hear you soon; and believe me to remain

Your very sincere and affectionate

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter III.

To Philomela, of the King's Dale

I HAVE just received mine own with usury. The bee found its way to my hive with wax on its legs and honey in its bag. The promised land still flows with this delicious fare. Eat as much of it as doth thee good; for such is the knowledge of wisdom when it enters the heart; "then there shall be a reward, and thine expectation shall not be cut off." I am a tenant at will; and every little wind that shakes the cottage I am ready to take as a warning to quit, which will hasten my arrival at the better house not made with hands. And I am the more inclined to entertain such thoughts, as our Israel at large begin to loathe the manna, calling the weightier matters light food. For such conduct the divine resentment may justly appear; yea, and will appear, to send a famine in the land, and cleanness of teeth throughout all their tribes. The numberless clouds without rain, which are blowed to and fro with every wind, throughout all our coasts, are certain preludes to this evil arrow; for they will make empty the soul of the hungry, and cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. But even this shall not deprive me of my crown, nor screen their bricks from God's scourge. How light are these bodily afflictions when the dying love of Jesus affords to the weary mind a downy pillow! "I will keep that man in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on me." This is making f8a all our bed easy in our sickness, and is the sweetest rest to the soul on the bed of languishing.

It is true the eye of faith, in the rays of the morning star. perceivers the day-dawn and day-spring from on high inclined to visit; and the soul struggles hard to quit the dark and gloomy regions of death's shadow. As the radiance of immortal glory spreads, the more precious is it for the eye of Faith to behold the sun. This is seeing Him who is invisible to

all the sight of mortals, or to all the light of nature. The goodness of Jehovah appears in the land of the living; faith perceives it, and draws her unerring conclusion to the enlightened mind, that "He is the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." The heavenly dawn shines upon obscure prophecy, and illumines that dark place, and brings divine harmony to light, where carnal reason had bred the worst confusion. Confidence puts her hand on divine veracity, and waits till faithfulness makes the promise good. And here the soul faints unless she believes. But the heavenly dove flutters in the heart, 'broods over the soul, and produces hope and expectation, which are both the soul's anchor and looker-out: the former stays her from sinking in her fainting fits, and the other fills her with anxiety till the desire is accomplished. Thus faith sees the promised object at a distance, and a divine impulse on the will bends it to make the choice, until the immortal seed of electing and everlasting love is shed abroad in the heart by the promised Comforter; and then the affections are all called forth to acquiesce in and to admire the choice. Now the Ancient of Days, and the child whose age is a hand-breadth, are no more at a distance. The Sun of Righteousness and the worm of the dust meet together, without any danger of being scorched or dried up. He presents his suffering nature to view, and shines through it; darkness passes, and the true light shines; while the eye sees, the ear hears, and faith feels the word of life. O how melting, how humbling, how soul and self-debasing, is the vision! And, when it speaks in the court of conscience, then "the just shall live by faith." There is no more spirit left; all, all is drunk up, and crucifixion takes place; fellowship in his sufferings, and being planted together in the likeness of his death, is both felt and understood; and the effect is, the world becomes crucified in the vision, and the sinner is crucified to the world. This is manifesting himself on earth to the objects given him; and, when he awakes, arises, and ascends again, he takes the heart, the affections, the thoughts, the desires,

wishes, appetites, and all the powers of the soul, with him, and leaves us as mere shadows without substance, machines without wheels, or as automaton figures. We may speak, and that is all; and sometimes not that. Whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell; God knoweth. The match is made, the knot is tied, and Philomela is bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord my God. The bond of the covenant has encompassed her; and all that he loves must live; for the true light always conveys dying love, which is his healing beams. All light unattended with this, is short of the saving health promised to all nations; for there is neither salvation, health, nor life, in it. Bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, and one spirit with him, and complete in him, and without fault before the throne; these are great mysteries. But I speak concerning my master and mistress, whose willing servant I hope ever to remain. Signed and delivered.

From the Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter IV.

To Noctua Aurita, of the Desert.

I RECEIVED yours, and my heart rejoiced when, I saw the handwriting. I know the Lord will reward you for your labour of love to my soul. It grieved me much to find you was laid by from your work. I hope ere this you are about again; for I verily believe the Lord will not keep you a prisoner long, because, under him, there are so many that are looking to you for food, and there are so few under shepherds to feed them. Last week the Lord was pleased to visit my tabernacle with a disorder which I had some apprehension would have take, me home. But he has brought me back again; for what end I am at a loss to know. I want to be gone. I know there is a mansion prepared for me, and that nothing shall ever separate me from his presence, who is the life and joy of my soul. I know now what you meant in the first Letter you sent me, after my fetters were broken off. It has much puzzled me till lately. You said that faith was come to me by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; and that faith would shortly work by love; and that love would cast out all fear and torment, and then the match would take place. Indeed I find it so; for I very sensibly feel the effects of union to Christ. Well might the apostle break out in wonder, and say, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." But we shall know more of it when, a ac4 s you observe, we shall see the lustre of a million suns, which will smile on us, burn in us, and shine through us, for evermore. These expressions, as it were, set my soul on fire. But these words come to my mind, where the apostle says, "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye may inherit the promises." And I believe no soul ever needed patience more than myself. I find you will not let me enjoy my

sweet morsel without the bitter herbs; you must bring to my remembrance the wormwood and the gall my soul felt under Moses' yoke. I verily believe that such a man as you can certainly divine; and therefore do believe what you say. But I am not there yet; no, I am in the banqueting-house, and his banner over me is love. I assure you my mortal part can hardly support me under it. I know my body is much weakened, which is the reason I think that the Lord will not keep me here long; for I seem to live entirely above. I have enjoyed much satisfaction in the company of the citizen who was lately at the vicarage. I feel union of heart with him. He seems truly contrite. I pray the Lord to appear for him, and heal the breaches which are made in his spirit, and restore to him health and cure. I hope we shall see you ere long in the King's dale. Your kind expressions of love in Christ Jesus towards us I really believe, for you have shewn it; and I am sure that the same bond holds us to each other that holds us to Christ our head. His Majesty's herald, I believe, is well. My soul was sweetly fed yesterday under his excellent oration. I wished him to continue his sound till midnight. I believe I should not have fallen down with sleep. He brought forth milk and strong meat, that each might have a portion in due season. I really think he has had much of the power and presence of God with him ever since the meeting of our solemn assembly in the barn and the bower. Every time the Lord sends you among us you confirm and strengthen the work on our souls done by the King's herald. So you see that self-interest is one motive of our wishing to see you. However, I believe one may say for many, that we love you dearly in the Lord Jesus as you do us. I should be glad to hear from you as soon as convenient. My other half desires to be kindly remembered to you. Must conclude, and remain

Your affectionate friend and sister in the Lord Jesus Christ,

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter V.

To Philomela, of the King's Dale

BELOVED of God, thine epistle came safe to band. The tidings are good; and God appears faithful, true, good, gracious, merciful, loving, kind, and tender; mindful of his covenant, and pitiful to self-lost, self-condemned, and self-despairing sinners. The bitterness of death is past, the sackcloth is put off, and the best robe is put on. He hath loosed "the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion." The strong hold of Satan is demolished, the prison of unbelief has yielded up its prisoner of hope, and she that sat in darkness shews herself. Wonderful is the resurrection of the soul under the Spirit's quickening and comforting operations. When a sense of divine wrath, the intolerable burden of guilt, the spirit of heaviness, begin to be removed from off the soul; when despondency, dejection, and terrible apprehensions, begin to subside; the mind sweetly ascends, and every captivated and enraptured thought ascends with it. Attracting love from above draws the affections to the right hand of the Majesty on high; while faith deals with dying love and all-atoning blood, hope casts her anchor within the veil; when charity casts out every let and hindrance, together with every rival, and paves the way for the best Beloved to yield to an undissolved union, to knit the marriage knot, and become one spirit with the dear-bought soul. O wonder of wonders! Adieu.

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter VI.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

I HAVE not words to express my thankfulness for the favours you are heaping upon me. My debt is increasing, and I have nothing to pay. But I do verily believe that my dear Redeemer will give you a full reward. Blessed be his name, he does give me a heart to pray for it; "And he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the spirit, because the spirit itself maketh intercession for us, according to the will of God." Your Letter came as a broad seal to all that I had experienced from the Monday till Thursday evening in the week following, when I received yours. During those days my union to Christ was made as clear to me as ever I saw the sun at noonday. What I felt in my soul of the effects of dying love no tongue nor pen can ever express. The godly sorrow it produced in my heart melted it. The Lord did give me to look on him whom I had pierced, and mourn; and this dissolved my stony heart, and broke it in a thousand pieces. The three verses of Mr. Hart's hymn on the Prodigal quite overcame me, viz.

The prodigal's return'd,
Th' apostate bold and base,
Who all his Father's counsels spurn'd
And long abus'd his grace. What treatment since he came?
Love tenderly exprest.
What robe is brought to hide his shame ,'
The best, the very best. Rich food the servants bring,
Sweet music charms cd5 his ears:
See what a beauteous costly ring
The beggar's finger wears.

My joy and godly sorrow kept increasing; and on Tuesday following it rose so high, that I was incapable of attending to the domestic concerns of my family. I could only go about the

house saying, "Lord, I cannot live so; I cannot, cannot. Do take me. Thou knowest I cannot bear up tinder such manifestations of dying love." Surely I was drunk with the new wine of the kingdom. The Lord did make me so to drink as to forget my poverty, and to remember my misery no more. Surely the Lord is preparing me for something; but what I know not. However, I am persuaded I shall not be led in this way long; but am quite in the dark what will be my path next. I think he is either preparing me for glory, or I shall be exercised with some fiery trial. However, what I experienced this last month I believe no temptation that I shall be exercised with will ever erase it from my mind. I know now that Christ is mine, and that nothing shall ever separate me from him. I am saying with the spouse, "A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved unto me; he shall lie all night between my breasts." I am truly glad to hear, by a friend, that you are better, and able to follow the plough. May the Lord crown your labours with success, that the fallow ground of sinners' hearts may be prepared for the reception of the precious seed, that the incarnate Word may be formed in many hearts! I shall be happy to see you. I hope it will not be long before I have that pleasure. I saw the King's herald last night; he was well. I believe he rejoices to see my happiness. May the Lord bless and prosper him! The power that came down upon us at Gasson's Bower seems still to remain, both with him and us. Surely that was a time never to be forgotten. Our dear sister Moorhen begs me to present her kind love to you, and she thanks you for your kind Letter; but says you give her too much encouragement, and she is afraid she shall never be able to write to you again; but desires me not to forget to tell you that she loves you dearly for the work of God upon you. I think we may say of her, as Christ said of Nathaniel when he saw him coming to him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" My very soul cleaves to her. Precious she is to me, and dear to the Lord, I have no doubt. I shall be happy to hear from you as soon as convenient. I hope the Shunamite's continually coming will not

weary you. Let me continue to have an interest in your prayers. I believe I never stood in more need of them; for I think that Satan is enraged at me, and perhaps is laying some snare for my feet. Pray that the Lord would give me wisdom, that I may not be ignorant of his devices. My paper tells me to leave off. Believe me ever to remain

Your very sincere and affectionate friend and sister in the bonds of the gospel,

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter VII.

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

THY savoury, unctuous, and rapturous epistle is safely arrived. Nothing now (since the operations of her late banquet on dying love, and her godly sorrow, and her kind reception) seems to be wanting to complete the glorious work of conversion, regeneration, and espousing to Christ. Her eyes have seen that Just One; and she has wept the tears of heavenly love over him in his dolorous sufferings, which hath been attended with a most joyful and assured sense of pacification; and the blessed effects were self-loathing, and such self-abhorrence as is not to be described. This is a secret which is peculiar to the elect of God, when the eternal union between Christ and the espoused soul takes place; and is what no hypocrite ever attained, and what no minister of the Letter could ever describe. Nothing now seems to be lacking in my dear sister's faith; she comes behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of the Son of God. She comprehends, with all saints that have gone before, both the height and depth of boundless love, which passeth knowledge. The Lord hath given her his sure tokens, and the things that accompany salvation; so that in all things she hath proved herself clear in this great matter. Henceforth there can be no enchantment against Philomela; no divination against this daughter of Abraham. I certainly shall, according to my first prediction, see her in the kingdo 1694 m of God above. This soul-dissolving union, this fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, and being made conformable unto his death in it, is the most noble, the most soul-enriching and soul-establishing work of the holy Spirit of promise; and the sensations of the soul under it produces the choicest experience that ever raised a soul to hope. It silts things to the bottom, and brings all things, yea,

even life and immortality itself, to light in the soul. The poor inner appears in all his worst colours, and Jesus the fairest among ten thousand. Not an angel in heaven was ever favoured with such a view, nor is there an angel in heaven that ever felt such a sensation; for Christ took not on him their nature, nor were they ever espoused to him. O the unparalleled meekness, contrition, submission, and resignation, that is felt in the heart of the poor creature when the ring, the robe, and the fatted calf, are brought forth! How the soul is settled and fixed, so as not to leave room for a doubt, a scruple, an if, or a but; for it is assuring us, and sealing us up to the day of eternal redemption.

The Lord certainly is preparing thee for something, my sister. And wouldst thou know what it is? Why, "Abraham made a great feast the day that Isaac was weaned." After this the breast is put up, and a little bitter aloes is rubbed upon it, insomuch that every sweet drop is followed with bitterness, which I call one of the worst perfumes that scent the Saviour's robes: "All his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia." Thy last Letter explained the myrrh, which is love, for that always stands first; and aloes is the next to it, which thy next Letter will smell of more or less. Ezekiel's roll and John's little book had these compositions in them. You may call them bitter sweets; for they both agree in their confessions upon this matter: "It was in my mouth sweet as honey, and when I had eaten it my [heart] belly was bitter." When the suckling times are over, the lamb is taken out of the bosom and turned adrift, being ordered to go behind and to follow the shepherd. This treatment is dreadful, and what was never expected. And now, instead of the word affording sincere milk, it is a dry breast. The little one finds no spoon meat, no bearing upon the sides, no kisses from the lips, no smiles from the face, no answers to their request.

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." And all this is true. But the mother puts the last child down upon its feet among the rest, to make room upon the knee for the new Comer. "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it. In simplicity be ye children, but in understanding be men." Ay, says Philomela; but my soul desires the first ripe fruit. What shall I do when there is no cluster to eat? Ay, but there is food: "I will send pastors after my own he, art, that shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Not so; "How can the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?" True: "But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." But is he not to gather the lambs with his arms, and to carry them in his bosom? Yes: but, after they are one year old, they are not called lambs, but sheep.

The rams of Nebaioth must minister unto him. When he puts forth his own sheep he goes before them, and they must hearken to his voice, and follow him. But those that are ewes, great with young, must rely on his power, and hang by his hand; for he leads those. But the lambs, which are under a year old, are, in the general, put in the bosom, under the shepherd's cloak, while the love of the shepherd's heart keeps them warm, and the girdle of faithfulness and truth bears them up. But after this they are put among the rest of the flock, and taken to the fold, upon the heights of Israel, where their fold is to be.

A man newly married, according to the old law, was to cheer up his wife for one year, and not to be charged with war. But after this, war and business must be followed, and other young virgins must enjoy their espousals. But O how shall I endure to see the younger daughters espoused, and enjoying their heavenly nuptials, if I should be left to serve, without a smile, without one propitious look, from that Sweet One, who

hath left me like a silly dove without a heart! Love-sickness would bring me to my grave, and jealousy would scorch me in the injured lover's flames. I, who have been as a tabret, and banqueted in the wine-cellar so long, shall I ever come, in my love-sickness, to beg a drop or an apple of the young daughters of Zion? or to say, "Stay me with flagons, for I am sick of love?" It all lies in the following prophecy: "For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." When this comes to pass, rebellion, jealousy, rage, &c. with every other corruption, will rise up and shear themselves with seven heads and ten horns Ay, says Philomela; but I hope in all this thou wilt be a false prophet. Amen and amen, says

Thine in the Lord Jesus Christ,

In The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter VIII.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

SINCE Philomela received your last favour her soul has been vexed within her, and she must shew it to you, because you are made manifest in my conscience to be a true prophet of the Lord. You prophesied, in your last, that my scent must be changed; and that, as my garments had smelled of myrrh, the next time I came to you you should discern the bitter aloes also. I knew you would not prove a false prophet to me. But I wish to put the evil day far from me; and therefore said I would not believe it till it came upon me. However, Satan laid a snare for me. He knew I had been for some time in the banqueting-house, feasting on the feast of fat things, and wines on the lees, such as he never had tasted of, nor ever will. The dear souls in the dale, who are on my heart to live and die with them, seeing my happiness, and I can keep nothing from them, for freely I receive, and therefore freely I must give, knowing, by experience, that "there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth," and I believe Satan knew that their souls got some good, because they covet my company, and therefore he came to me in this manner: he insinuated that my being so open and free to tell them how God dealt with me sprung from nothing but pride, because they should think highly of me; and that, instead of their eyes looking to Christ, they were looking to a creature. I thought I could appeal to conscience it was otherwise; for I knew that, if it were so, it would bring the rod of God upon me in such a manner as they might see what they were trusting to. For a few days I found it a great burden; it made me hate myself. However, I made a resolution that, if my tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth, I would no more speak to them of what the Lord had done, or was doing, on my soul, This was last

Thursday week. On Saturday last, one named Q in the corner, came to see me: she has attended the orations of our herald for some time; and I have often thought there was a weight on her mind, but never could get her to be open. But now she could hold in no longer. She told me she had read several proclamations lately; and she had also observed a particular alteration in my countenance of late. I was silent which was enough for her; and she said, there was no one she could open her mind to. She enjoined secrecy; out I could make no promises. She gave me such a description of her case, and put such questions to me, that I quite forgot the resolution I had made of not opening my mouth any more. She dragged every thing out of me that God had done on my soul, from the time I was first wounded, till the Lord broke my fetters. And her soul seemed to be raised to a degree of hope, at least that there might be mercy for her. A deep work it is; not the work of a day, a month, or a year; though God has permitted it to be kept secret, and she is not aware that any soul knows it but myself. She had written two Letters to our watchman, but burnt them both. However, I ran with the tidings to him as soon as I could. She cannot keep it much longer from him. After this, it came to my mind that I had passed the bounds of my promise. However, I promised to do so no more. And now you shall know how God dealt with me on Thursday evening after. As soon as the herald had finished his oration, she came to me at Bethel, with such a countenance as I shall never forget. She was too full to speak. My conscience told me she was cut deeper, under the alarm and warning of the watchman of the night, than ever she was before. But I said in my heart I would not speak to her. I only asked her if she was not well; and she went from me. But my conscience smote me, and cut me in a manner I cannot describe. I went home and to bed; but such a night's lodging I had! The devil and conscience made fine work with me, because I had kept my mouth shut to her when I knew she came to me for sympathy. I think I would have given fifty pounds if I could have got up in

the night and gone to her; but she was too far off. However, I found my mind at liberty in the morning to write her a Letter, which I did, and sent it her directly. On the feast day at even she came to me again at Bethel, with these words: "I thank you; I thank you; I do not deserve it. O what shall I do! Never was any thing so seasonable. If I could have spoken to you on Thursday night I must have told you that I was sure of being damned. O that I was one of the marked ones? My heart was ready to burst, and I cried to her, "You are one, you are one of them." "O," says she to me, "you shall hear from me: indeed you shall." My very bowels go out after her. Surely Satan will get the worst of it. May I remember the battle, and do no more. Job. xli 8 I know it will rejoice your heart to bear o! this poor sinner. I think her deliverance is not far off. I find I have filled my paper, therefore can only say, I have found the peace I had lost. I believe you know that I was born again to be troublesome to you. Hope you are well. Pray let me hear from you as soon as you can. I have not said one half I wished to say. The Lord bless you with the best of blessings. So prays

Your affectionate sister in the Lord Jesus,

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter IX

To Philomela, in the King's Dale, or Elsewhere.

THINE epistle came safe to hand, and savours a little of the bitter ingredients mentioned in my last. This article is known to all the family, and to them only; nor doth the stranger intermeddle with its opposite. In my last I shewed thee a little of what would befall thee in thy latter days, lest, when these things come on thee, that thou shouldest think some strange thing had happened unto thee; and, if they should continue long, that thou shouldest grow weary and faint in thy mind. Under the old dispensation, as I hinted before, every one that had built a new house, planted a new vineyard, or that was lately married, was to be free at home, and not to be charged with, nor to be engaged in, any war for one whole year. Thou art now building in the temple of the Lord, and wast lately transplanted into the living vine, and newly married to the soul's best husband, and thy year of jubilee is out about next Christmas; near about which time thou mayest expect, either within or without, the alarms of war. When the captain of our salvation takes the young recruits rote the banqueting house he hangs the banner of love over their heads, while he unfurls it in their hearts; which seems designed to let them know that, when their bounty is spent, they must prepare for the field of action. Therefore let me advise thee now, whilst thou art in the prese 11f5 nce-chamber, and the door of hope is shut about thee; while his throne is accessible, and he is shewing thee his love; while all his secret mysteries are brought to light, his secret treasures opened and brought forth, and his heavenly riches communicated: now, while his ear, his heart, and hand, are all open; now while the days of his espousals, and the days of the gladness of his heart, continue; and while the bridegroom is with thee, and he tells thee to open thy mouth

wide and he will fill it, saying, "What is thy petition, and what is thy request, and it shall be granted thee, even to the whole of the kingdom?" Now, I say, is the time to covet earnestly the best gifts. Seek every love-token, ask every needful grace, every blessing, and every gift, that accompanies salvation. Follow after charity, wisdom, righteousness, peace, in all thy petitions; and crave all the promises, in the power of them, which his liberal heart can afford, with respect to future help, need, and preservation; for I must tell thee again, as I have told thee in time past, that "The time will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it." If thou pursue this my counsel, thou wilt be furnished with many powerful pleas in time to come; and, if thou minute down his gracious words and love visits, these would, in some future time, fill thy mouth with arguments. But, alas! thou art too busy. This harvest will be past, and thy sun will be declining; the shadows of the evening will be stretching out, and the trial of faith be coming on. Satan will plunder thy memory of all the sweet promises thou hast obtained. He will address thee as an angel of light, and work upon all the natural and corrupt affections that thou art possessed of; and shall so influence thy natural passions, as that thou shalt even be at a loss to know from whence they come. Then will he sift up, overhaul, and call in question, all this good work; and, while universal charity is flowing in, the best beloved will be drawing off; and then, like a young wanton spendthrift, thou wilt set down and condemn thine own folly and indiscretion for not adopting these measures; for, during the furnace work, there will be only now and then a standing behind the wall, and a glimpse through the lattice, which provokes to jealousy, and, in the general, terminates in fainting fits and love-sickness; at which seasons the comeliness of the countenance is much defaced; the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit sullied; gospel simplicity tarnished; the bowels of mercy straitened; and, instead of well-set hair, baldness. The tabret becomes a bye-word; conversation loses its savour,

and the words their salt. Let me advise thee to provide for thyself a few high heaps of witnesses, and to set up a few private landmarks, which shall serve thee in time to come; for the many that are looking to thee, and emptying thy barrel and cruse, will make thee the keeper of their vineyard; and thou shalt by and by confess that thine own vineyard thou hast not kept. To be open, and to communicate, and to tell others what God hath done for our souls, is right. The woman healed of her issue was called forth before the whole company to confess what she had done, and what had been done in her; and it was approved. When with the heart we believe, with the mouth we must confess; for this is being found to return, and to give glory to God. But to make thine own calling clear, and thine own election sure, is, and ought to be, the principal work, and is laying in a good foundation against the time to come. "When I am old and gray-headed forsake me not, O God of my salvation!" saith the Psalmist. And, if thou dost not lay up for a future famine, future times of drought, or future desertions, thou shalt surely complain, as others have done, "O that it was with me as in months past, when God preserved me, when the Almighty was with me, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle, and when my glory was fresh in me!" Lay this epistle by thee, and read it over seven years hence; and then send me word how many lying predictions are found in this scribble of thine

Affectionate friend and servant,

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter X.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

WAS I perfect in the language of Canaan, I could convey to your mind the sensations of love and gratitude I feel in my heart to you for the unparalleled kindness you shew me in your work of faith and labour of love, in the Lord Jesus, to my soul. You never will know, till we sit down in glory together, what an instrument the Lord makes you of confirming and establishing his work on my soul. However, sure I am that this kindness of yours shall in no wise lose its reward. I think that his Majesty's herald and yourself were both born into this world on purpose to be useful to me. I received a Letter from you last Wednesday, which prophesied of some dark and cloudy days. Sure I am that my old man will procure me a large share of fatherly chastisement. But "to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." To be put and kept at a distance from him whom my soul loves, must be a hell upon earth; and I think will be more severely felt by me now, since I have been indulged with such manifestations of his love to my soul as I have been lately. But there will be a sweetness in it when he shall turn again: for it is but for a small moment he will hide his face; and at that time there will be nothing of that bitter ingredient in it called vindictive wrath. I know you never yet sent me one lying prediction, and I am sure that you never will; for every epistle you have sent me 1092 came under the seal of the Spirit of God; and precious they are to my soul, and a valuable treasure I esteem them. Their price is far above rubies, more desirable than fine gold, "sweeter also than the honey and the honeycomb." I must now dismiss your first Letter, though I could say much more about it, and the effects of it on my mind. But I have much to say about your second Letter, which I received on Saturday evening. It

caused sleep to depart from my eyes, and slumber from my eyelids; and I was full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day. And, had I had the wings of a dove, I should have been at Paddington as early on Sabbath-day morning as Mary was at the sepulchre of her dear Lord. The first page of it is a mystery to me. I have not wisdom to understand these words of the wise, and his dark saying, "The bee that came to your hive with the wax and honey." I cannot make it out. But it is the "feeling of the wind shaking the cottage," which you think is hastening your arrival at the better house, which filled my heart with sorrow. It made my heart tremble for the ark of God. My mind got a little composed from the Lord's dealings with Israel when he was about to take away Elijah. He did not do it till he had anointed another prophet in his room. As there are so few watchmen that God hath set on the walls of our Zion who can detect an enemy, and give the time of the night, I hope the Lord is not about to leave the city of our assemblies in the hands of blind watchmen, who cannot understand; because he says that "our teachers shall not be moved into a corner any more." From what you say next, in one of yours, I gather that you have some more enemies to encounter. Perhaps you are in perils, according to custom, among false brethren. You speak of many loathing the manna, and calling it light food. This certainly calls for divine judgment. But, as you observe, your crown is sure, because your reward is with your God. Whoever they are that fight against the truth, and the power of it, fight against God. But I can tell you that the thought of your being in trouble drew forth all the sympathetic powers of my soul; and I am sure my feelings have been mingled with yours ever since; and, if it is not too great a favour, may I ask thee to lend me thy key, that I may open this lock, that my mind may be eased; and I should be obliged to you for it as soon as you can. I must speak of the contents of the other part of one of your Letters. The second time I read it I cannot describe the sweet ray of light, from God's Spirit, which came on my mind, accompanied with a sweet, melting,

humbling frame, which brought me to the feet of Jesus. I found I had the key to that which was my own experience. I could go with you to the end of your Letter. You have brought forth all the operations of the love of God on my soul. The effects it produces, and the soul-melting sensations of the poor sinner under it; the crucifixion of him to the world, which takes place as the consequence of it; was greatly blessed to me, as it described my own feelings far better than I could myself. I can with confidence say, that I am planted together in the likeness of Christ's death, and likewise in the likeness of his resurrection. The world and I are well agreed; I am crucified to that, and that is crucified to me; for, as you observe, Jesus has taken with him my heart, affections, thoughts, desires, wishes, and all that is not mortal, and I am now a stranger, and a sojourner here, as all my fathers in the faith were. And I have need, of much patience to wait my appointed time till my change come. The Lord bless you, and give you much of his presence, and of the enjoyment of his eternal love. So prays

Your very sincere and affectionate friend and sister in the bonds of the gospel of Christ,

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter XI.

To Philomela, in the King's Dale, or Elsewhere.

LONG looked-for is come at last: "They that sow shall reap." But I thought it was almost four months before the expected harvest came on. Banqueting times take up all the attention; and we know the memory is treacherous. The woman at the well forgot her pitcher; Peter talked he knew not what; and Paul forgot whether his body was in the company or out of it in his flight to Paradise. And no wonder, when the new wine of the kingdom goes down so sweetly as to cause "the lips of those that are asleep to speak;" for persons that talk in their sleep are not always consistent. Glad am I to find that my sister continues in the fellowship of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. She holds fellowship with the Father by a participation of his everlasting love; she has fellowship with Jesus, and walks with him in peace and equity; and has fellowship with the Spirit by the witness he bears with her spirit, and by the cry of Abba, Father; and by the comfort that he communicates, by the promises he applies, and by his kind help against her infirmities at the throne of grace. O happy, happy souls, who rule with God, and are faithful with the saints! How great the condescension of the Most High, who humbleth himself to visit such poor mortals, and to enwrap them in the rays and flames of infinite divinity; and with favour 1293 to compass them as with a shield; and to exalt them sensibly into the enjoyment of his omnipresence; where we see the King in his beauty, and the land that is very far off!" In whose reconciling face the Father of all mercies for ever shines, as well pleased; and shines with approbation, complacency, and delight, as propitious, and as the fountain of all grace, mercy, and peace; while we look as through a glass darkly, and are changed into the same image; renewed

in knowledge, and blessed with righteousness and true holiness; in which image the mind goes from glory to glory; from the glory of one perfection to the glorious discovery of another, till we see all his divine attributes meet, centre, and harmonize together, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to the glory of God in the salvation of souls This, this is the religion of Jesus, and God's mystery among the Gentries. Enthroned in our affections, he reigns unrivalled: and there he sways his righteous sceptre, and spreads the beams of immortal light. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." All the poor sinner's thoughts are brought into sweet captivity; tranquillity and peace are the blessed fruits and effects of his glorious and undisturbed reign; while the poor from the dust, and the beggar from the dunghill, inherit the blessings of his throne, and the flourishing felicity of his mild government, and admire the order of it, the justice and equity of it, the execution of his laws, and the regard that he pays to truth in every branch of his administration. This, my sister, is the kingdom of God, and the empire of all-conquering grace, which banishes the infernal usurper from the heart, and divests him of his dark panoply, in which he trusted, and by which the objects of heaven's choice are long kept in slavery. Other lords have had dominion over us; but now, by thy power, will we make mention of thy name. In righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, stands the glorious reign of the King of kings, which rescues helpless souls from the triple reign of Satan, sin, and death. But how little is this religion known in our day! How few that preach the kingdom of God! and how few that are acquainted with that power in which this kingdom stands! And why should the Ancient of Days reveal and make these things known to us, who are as sheep that no man taketh up; as the off-scouring of the earth, whom none sought after or cared for? Shut up in the dark regions, and laid in irons; hated, as we thought, by both worlds, and condemned to perpetual drudgery; reprobated, as I once believed, from eternity; cursed from the womb, and doomed to destruction!

But our thoughts were not God's thoughts. We were not to die till we had seen the Lord's Christ. The vision was to speak in us; and we were appointed to look at him whom we have pierced, and mourn, and melt in the soul-dissolving vision till the divine potter thought fit to mould and form us into another vessel, which shall contain the heavenly treasure, without bursting with pride, so as to break the bottle, and cause the wine to run out, and the bottle to perish. The bee, my sister, with wax on her wings, and honey in her bag, was thine own epistle. Perpetual heats and colds much impair my poor, frail tabernacle, and I feel it daily, especially in the winter season; and therefore I know it cannot stand long. The whole bulk of professors in general hate the power et godliness, and are taught to guard themselves against it, and all convictions from it; and I know that God will visit for these things. Our country hath long been the valley of vision. But the sun is going down, and the shadows of the evening are stretching out; the light is much hated, and stumbling upon the dark mountains must be expected. But may we, "who are of the day, watch and be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation! For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the most high and eternal God, be ascribed, as is most justly due, all honour and glory, power and praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for ever and ever, amen and amen, says

Thine affectionate brother in the best of all bonds, and in the sweetest of all ties,

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter XII.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

I HAVE been expecting to hear from you every post for some time. I therefore have taken the liberty of sending you this, "to stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance." I hope this will find you well in body and soul. I know it is always well with the body when the soul prospers; and nothing can make the soul prosper but the presence of the dear Redeemer, the friend of sinners, and a sense of his love known, felt and enjoyed, in the heart, by the operation of the blessed Spirit. This makes a heaven upon earth. The Lord has blessed me with the enjoyment of this ever since I came from Gasson's Bower, more or less. And truly he hath made my cup to run over. O what love to the poor prodigal, who had spent all his substance, and was brought to a famine, yea, brought to want a morsel of bread, and a drop of water, and could not feed upon husks! Never did I, till of late, feel such meltings of heart under a sense of this love manifested to my soul. Like Ezekiel, I have been brought through this river of pleasure four times. The first time it was up to my ankles; the second time it came to my knees; the next time to my loins; and I believe I have been brought through it the fourth time this last week; and I found it to be a river without bottom or shore. And this water is come into my soul; and I am sure that I shall never sink here; for the Lord has given me the b75 hands of faith, that I may spread them forth and swim. I feel all those wonderful operations that the prodigal felt when his father said to the servant, "Bring hither the best robe, and put it on him; put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." Feel it I do; but it is past all description, Costly it was, and that the Redeemer knew when he gave his soul an offering for my sins, and shed his precious blood to satisfy divine justice in my behalf. O it

melts me, and breaks my heart! my dear brother, help me to praise him! I cannot, I cannot praise him as I would. But I shall do it when this mortal shall have put on immortality. I shall be satisfied when I awake with his likeness. I believe the Lord will not keep me long here. Well I know that neither height nor depth, life nor death, things present, nor things to come, shall ever separate me from his love. It rejoices my heart to see the Lord is carrying on his work on the hearts of many poor sinners under the orations of his Majesty's herald in this dark corner of the globe. He is "a burning and a shining light." He stands in the rostrum as a flaming fire for God. Surely he is the greatest blessing that ever God bestowed on such worthless sinners as we are. Sister Moorhen's wounds get deeper and deeper. I believe she will, in the Lord's time, be brought to that strait where all human strength expires, and where there is none shut up or left. There is another poor soul also who is tumbling all to pieces. This is the best news I can send you. O that Zion's cords may be lengthened, and her stakes strengthened! Give my kind love to your travelling friends; and accept my thanks for your soul-strengthening Letter. It was as cold water to a thirsty soul, or good news from a far country; "as apples of gold in pictures of silver." And I know that my God will reward you. He says theft a cup of cold water given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose its reward. And those that water others shall be watered themselves. Was it not so, I think the favours he heaps on me would make me miserable. I am happy to find you are better. I hope it will not be long before I see you in the Dale. I hope you will favour me with a Letter soon. In the mean time, let me have an interest in your prayers, that I may be kept humble, watchful, and near to the Lord. May the Lord bless you in body and soul, in your basket and store, in your goings out and in your comings in, is the prayer of

Your very sincere friend and sister in Christ Jesus,

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter XIII.

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

"THUS saith the Lord God, I will take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one and will plant it on an high mountain and eminent. In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar; and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell," Ezek. xvii. 22. From the royal house of David was this young twig cropped, and on Mount Zion it is planted, where the fullness of the ever-blessed Godhead, which dwells in Jesse's Branch, displays his omnipresence and omnipotence in the souls of thousands of poor sinners, and unites them, as boughs in the cedar, to himself; in which almighty power, love and goodness, manifested and put forth in the heart of the sinner, the soul rests satisfied and contented, and finds and feels his shadow a sweet screen from Satan's fiery darts, and from the piercing sentences of a fiery law. In the shadowing branches of this goodly cedar shall the birds of Paradise dwell. Sing care away, Philomela; for our beloved giveth songs in the night. Sing of his right hand and stretched-out arm, which got himself the victory over thy heart, and over all thy foes. Sing of mercy and of judgment; of judgment past, and of mercy come. Sing of thy well-beloved touching his vineyard, and of union with the living vine. Sing of his glorious triumph, of his dying love, and of his redeeming blood; and sing glory to the righteous. "Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody; for as well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there; all my springs are in thee."

He that receives his testimony into his heart, namely, that we must be born again, and that he that believes in him shall be saved, and he that follows him shall have the light of life, is sealed; the testimony is come home to his soul with power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; which assurance is the sealing, confirming, and establishing, the soul in the certainty and enjoyment of the testimony received; and of a part and lot in all the blessings and benefits promised and testified of. He sets his hand to the seal that God is true; he subscribes the evidence, and the book of the purchase. "One shall say, I am the Lord's," for he hath taken me as a prey from the mighty; "and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob," saying, I have got both the birthright and the blessing; "and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel," crying aloud, I have prevailed in prayer; I have looked at my beloved till I have overcome him; and I shall be more than conqueror, over heaven and earth, through him that hath loved me; for as a prince have I power with God and with man, and have prevailed.

These are golden days, Philomela! Make the most of them now, while the evil days come not; now, while Wisdom leads thy soul through all her mystic gates, wards, and doom, and exhibits her glorious and visionary scenes before thee. "She stands on the top of high places," Prov. viii.; on Calvary, on mount Zion, and on every little hill thereof; on the mountain of rocks, and on all the ancient mountains, and on the everlasting hills of electing love, and "by the way in the places of the paths." Here she stands, in all these watering places, breathing places, resting places, halting places, and fainting places, in order to give caution, encouragement, refreshment, seasonable counsel, strength, and comfort; by all which they go from strength to strength, "while passing through the valley of Baca." Heavenly showers fill the pools: "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will make

the wilderness pools of water, and the dry land springs of water."

"She crieth at the gates;" and the voice of her cry is, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation, which keepeth the truth, may enter." "This is the gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter."

"She crieth at the entry of the city," saying, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Therefore thou art no more a stranger and a foreigner, but a fellow-citizen of the saints and of the household of God. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh."

"She crieth at the coming in of the doom." The first doom she cries at are the doors of death's shadow: "Hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?" Job, xxxviii. 17. These doors are the covering and veil that is spread over all nations, Isa. xxv. 7; and the dismal gloom that the god of this world hath blinded our minds with, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into us, and we should be saved. But Wisdom cries at these doors, saying, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." The light of the Lord penetrates through and opens these doors, and the understanding receives the light, and goes forth in it, and we begin, the doors being opened, with open face to behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18. But,

though the understanding is gone forth, the soul is not wholly enlarged: "Light is given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul."

Then Wisdom leads us to another door, saying, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope," Hosea, ii. 14, 15. Now hope enters in, and expectation goes forth; and the cry of Wisdom at this door is, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, which spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh; but his leaf shall be green, he shall not be careful in the year of drought, nor shall he cease from yielding fruit." Thus Wisdom rends the veil, and opens the doors of death's shadow, and lets the understanding look out of obscurity, and out of darkness. Then she banishes black despair, and opens the door of hope, when hope enters the soul, and expectation of better times goes forth.

And next she leads us to another door, saying, "They rehearsed all that God had done by them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles," Acts, xiv. 27. The seat or proper place of faith is the heart: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," &c. Obdurate hardness and unbelief are the doors that keep the word and faith out of the heart, till a divine power attends the voice of wisdom. But she cries at this door, and her powerful voice is, "As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me." Now faith goes into the heart by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; then our obdurate hardness gives way, the door of faith opens, and the right hand of the Lord makes the injurious bolt of cursed infidelity fly back. The opening of this door dissolves the soul: "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him," Song v. 4. But still we are not

enlarged; for this is but the hole of the door. The bowels move for him, but he is not come in the promised and glorious manifestation of himself. Faith is come, as it was to the blind man healed; but the object of faith is not yet discovered: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."

The next door that Wisdom opens is the door of the stronghold of Satan. And her voice at this door is, "I am sent" to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house," Isa. xlii. 7. "Son, daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee." And this is a full discharge. Guilt flies, the yoke of our transgression is broken, Satan vanishes, pardoning love flows in, and fear and torment are cast out; the chains of our sins are knocked off, the prison garments are laid aside, and the wedding garment is put on. He puts off our sackcloth, and girds us with gladness.

The next door is the door of mercy. This opens almost of its own accord, as soon as we escape the prison. By Jesus we have access with confidence into this grace wherein we stand. And the cry of Wisdom at this door is, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, 174c and shall go in and out and find pasture," John, x. 7-9. Now this door that admits us into the presence of God, and into communion and fellowship both with the Father and the Son, is God's lifting up the light of his countenance upon us, and giving us the light of the knowledge of the glory of himself in the face of Jesus Christ, and a full enjoyment of God's everlasting love through Christ, which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. This is the door; for, if God hides his face, who can behold him? and, without being drawn by his

love, who can come to him? And, if he leaves a man in 'his own guilt, and under the wrath of the law, by these things "He shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening," Job, xii. 14. Hence it appears that a man must have the light of the Lord's countenance, attended with his love, before he can enter into the joy of the Lord.

The next door that Wisdom cries at is the door of the wedding-chamber: "And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut," Matt. xxv. 10. Wisdom's cry at this door will be, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, enter the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." This door will be opened at the first resurrection, after the living saints are changed, and the dead in Christ raised; in which they will be safe, while the wicked are burnt up, and the world with them. And this will be Wisdom's last cry, "Thy dead men shall live; with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs; and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain," Isa. xxvi. 19-21.

Now will the Master be risen up, and have shut the door, after which all knocking and calling will meet with no regard, for there can be no admittance.

Thus, dearly beloved Philomela, have I endeavoured to shew thee something of the paths of Wisdom, together with her mystical gates and doors, as well as I could, and as far as I have been led through them; and through which all regenerate souls pass who follow the Lamb in the regeneration. This "is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath

not seen: the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it," Job, xxviii. 7, 8. The lion of the bottomless pit never walked here, nor were any whelps of his ever found there. And to this agrees the prophet: "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads," Isa. xxxv. 8-10. Numbers are searching to find this path, who never had so much as their face Zionward, but stumble upon the dark mountains in a way not cast up: "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them; because he knoweth not how to go to the city." This is the way that is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath; it is the way of life; and in the path thereof there is no death. The curse and wrath of God attend every other way but this. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Because they seek not union with the true vine, nor have they any regard to the branches in it, therefore their portion is cursed in the earth: he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards, Job, xxiv. 18. And now, what is this highway and a way? The highway is Christ and faith in him: "I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." This is the highway. And the way, which is to be called, The way of holiness, is following Christ in the regeneration; for such shall sit down with him on his throne.

Thus, Philomela.. I have led thee in the way which, in a state of nature, I knew not, and in a path which, to all unregenerate men, is not known, nor can be, till God make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. Upon all other paths but this hypocrites as well as saints may walk. But no lion nor lion's whelps, no fierce lion nor ravenous beast, no unclean

creature, no apostate, no heretic or hypocrite, have I ever met with or found upon this path: the way of regeneration is untrodden and unfrequented by all these. I could wish thee to make a few high heaps, and to set up a few landmarks, to be of use in future times. But nothing of this sort can be attended to at present; for at Wisdom's gates and doors not only her heavenly voice is heard and felt, but all manner of fruits, new and old, are laid up at these gates for his best beloved, Song vii. 13. Hence the pleasantness of the ways, the ravishing voice, and delicious fruit, take up all the attention; so that all advice upon this head is in vain. Therefore sing on, Philomela; for to add to the melody of thy heart, and to afford some fresh matter for the song, is the cause of my sending these to the chief singer on my stringed instruments, Hab. iii. 19.

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter XIV.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

YOUR having informed me that the bee came to your hive with wax on its legs, and honey in its bag, encouraged me to come again to you. Precious was your last to me! delicious fare! for really it has been so refreshing to my soul, that I can feed upon nothing else: therefore have compassion on me, and go on still to help me; and you will certainly experience the wise man's words to be true, viz. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth." Consider that this week there is no going up to Bethel. Our watchman is removed into a corner, so that we can neither see him nor hear him. The Lord bless the interview, and grant that he may soon return, and come to us in all the fullness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ. I have read again and again your last Letters, and found a second benefit. I believe, while I remain upon this earth, that I shall never have done with them. Some of the mysteries I had the key to before they came, or I never could have found out the riddle. Sweetly was my soul led into the experience and enjoyment of those blessed truths; which did so humble and meeken my soul, that it crucified me afresh to this sinful world; so that I am not fit to live in it. I seem quite insensible to every thing in it, and hardly at times know what I am about, or where I am. This has given me some light into those words of our blessed Saviour, in his prayer to 15b3 the Father before he entered upon his sufferings. Praying for his disciples, he says, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." I cannot but think that you have been lately a Sabbath-day's journey into some part of the promised land, and have reached as far as the brooks of Eshcol; for what you have sent to me seems to be some of the first ripe fruits, a most precious cluster. It could not be carried by one; but it hath

been laid on a staff, and borne betwixt two. It was one of the choicest of all blessings; no less than an earnest of the whole inheritance. O that I was but with you, to tell you what I enjoy now, while the King's herald is with you! But this is impossible. Wives and mothers must be keepers at home. But the heaven-born soul cannot be confined. Though absent in the body, yet am I present in spirit; and, had I the wings of a dove, nothing under heaven should hinder my flight, for once, into the Desert.

I know now, by blessed experience, that nothing but a sense of the dying love of Jesus can humble a proud heart, and soften the stubborn spirit of a sinner, so as to bring him to the Lord's feet; and I am a living witness that this will do it. This will subdue the most hardened, rebellious, and desperate wretch that ever breathed on this earth; and this will be my wonder and admiration to all eternity. O that I was but above, that I might praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God! How do I long to join with the hundred and forty and four thousand in their song to him that hath loved us, and redeemed us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Surely my voice will be the loudest among them.

My soul thanks you for what I have received this week from you. I have had a banquet indeed. May a full reward be given you by your Father, and my Father, your God and my God! A sweet shelter indeed my soul has found from the windy storm and tempest. I find it as the shadow of a great rock in fids weary land. My soul has still in remembrance the wormwood and the gall, which were bitter enough to my soul. But all is past; and nothing of vindictive wrath shall my soul know henceforth and for ever. What astonishing love was it for the Lord to pass by such a rebel as I was, and to say unto me, when I was in my blood, Live. Yea, he has spread his skirt over me; and in that blessed robe shall I appear before him in the great day, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; and,

though black as the tents of Kedar, fair as the curtains of Solomon. As you observe, could we always live on the mount, without any interruption; but, alas! down from the mount we must come. But I am, like Peter, for detaining the Lord, and building a tabernacle, that I may abide with him till he shall take me to the upper and better house.

What the Lord is preparing me for, I know not; and what my path will be next, I am in the dark about. You intimate that he is preparing me for the field of action. May I be taught to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ! the word, the flesh, and the devil, are against me, I know; but this I know likewise, that I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. However, at present I seem as if I had no enemies; for the Lord has made the corruptions of my heart, and Satan too, as still as a stone. And sweetly does he commune with my soul, which humbles me in the dust before him; and I feel such meltings of heart as I never knew any thing of before; which have been much produced by your two last Letters. The mystic gates and wards that wisdom is leading my soul through are some of the secrets that are with them in whose heart he has put his fear. "I," says Wisdom, "lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment, to cause them that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures." I believe that what I am now in the enjoyment of is some of that substance, that sabbath-day's portion, which you told me 'in my dream I should enjoy. Surely the Lord does now, as well as in days of old, instruct by dreams and visions of the night. "When deep sleep falleth upon men, then he sealeth their instructions." I am sure I can witness to the truth of this. We were greatly in expectation of seeing you before now. But the Lord knows best when to send you. I hope, when you do come, it will be with good news from a far country, and make it one of the days of the Son of Man to us. I think I need not tell you that I shall be happy to hear from you again. I have a young hidden one with me who desires to be

remembered to you. She wishes you the enjoyment of every spiritual blessing. She is Due that is waiting at the pool for the moving of the waters, to be healed of all her spiritual diseases. Our little sister, who hath no breasts, is much indisposed. I think she would greatly esteem a Letter from you. Remember my love to Father G__n. I hope he is not offended at the liberty I took in writing to him. I must conclude, wishing you every blessing of the better covenant, and that you may ever have much of the presence of the Lord with you. So prays

Yours, in sincere affection,

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter XV.

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

MY dear sister's epistle is arrived, with all its good tidings, and the reflections of good news from a far country. The night is not only far spent, but gone; with thee: and nothing but the day-spring from on high visits thee. The wilderness springs, and the desert blossoms as the rose. Nothing now but honey from the comb, wine from the cluster, and milk from the breast. The old man is crucified with Christ, yea, dead, buried, and the body of sins destroyed; and there is an end of him. Satan, who had the power of death, is destroyed also, for Christ hath triumphed over him upon the cross; so that no evil is expected from that quarter. Self-denial, a daily cross, the furnace of affliction, and the fiery trial of faith, are all out of sight, and out of mind, and neither desired nor expected.

You inform me that you should like to continue in that mount. But I must confess it is a mystery to me that thou art not down from it before now. Faith must be tried with fire before it shall be found unto praise, and glory, and honour, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Can you glory in your infirmities? Can you take pleasure in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake? To be sure the most useful soldiers in an army must be the young recruits, who are engaged in spending their bounty; and the most useful children in a family must be those who are hanging at the breast. Such soldiers serve to fill the muster-roll; and such children serve to increase the number of a family; and that is all the use they are of God hath set the day of prosperity and the day of adversity one against the other. But your evil days come not. The reason of my long silence is your long prosperity. I may be a fellow-helper of your joy; but to comfort them that mourn is a greater act of charity. It is not my

peculiar province to tune the love-strings of a heart that is always filled with melody. Besides, you have very few, in that part of the world, to sing to but those of heavy hearts; and much music to these may provoke them to jealousy, and they may envy your happiness, and be led, by the devil and unbelief, to curse their hard fate, unless you can mingle a little wisdom with it; that is, conceal it, when need requires, and become weak to the weak, and as bound to them that are under the law.

I once knew a young man who continued in his comforts for three or four years, and who seemed to have nothing else but joy and happiness; and at that time I had seldom any thing else but temptations, bondage, persecution, hunger, cold, and nakedness; and I have often envied his happiness, longed to be indulged, like him, and cursed my hard fate and evil days. But he turned out an awful apostate, and, when he had filled his measure, came to his end in the midst of his days. I am watching to see what sort of a suckling thou wilt turn out to be; whether one of them who always need milk, being unskilful in the word of righteousness; or one of full age, who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil, and so live upon strong meat. When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me, with all his saving benefits, when pardon, justification, and adoption, all came in at once, and perfect liberty was proclaimed, I looked at him whom I had pierced, and mourned; not for him, for I had got him; but over him, to think of his dreadful sufferings for such a worthless wretch as me. His dying love melted me; his comforts filled my soul with holy grief; I rejoiced in his salvation, but wept all the day long over my suffering Saviour. My unworthiness made me coyly put away his tender mercy from me, and I cringed from him to shun the light. But he pressed his love upon me, and pursued me, and compelled me to use freedom and familiarity with him. This glorious vision, and the blessed effects of it, continued, excepting a few intervals, for near

twelve months; and every evil of my heart was entirely hid from me; at which time the promises came into my seal swarming like bees; and, as they came into my heart, so they discharged their rich and blessed contents, and that with power, love, and comfort; when at the same time the Spirit explained their meaning to my understanding, and applied their blessings to my heart; and I sucked the breasts of these consolations; I milked out, and was satisfied and delighted with the abundance of Zion's glory. I was dandled on the knee, and borne upon the side; and, as one whom his mother comforteth, so did my God and Saviour comfort me; and was comforted in Jerusalem; for I had an open vision of that mystical city for some hours together, and that in the day-time. This open vision enlarged my mind, and extended my views, and my inward consolations abounded; insomuch that my soul melted with love, gratitude, meekness, humiliation, contrition, and godly sorrow, all the day long. I loathed myself in dust and ashes, and thought I could never be enough avenged on myself for my former folly, nor ever appear little enough in my own eyes, nor be enough grateful to the King of kings and Lord of lords. This continued, as before observed, well nigh a whole year, without much variation; and in these frames I was wonderfully secure, and expected daily to be ripening for glory, and that I should soon be called to the upper world; and I hinged for it. Little did I think that these comforts would ever be exchanged for spiritual desertions, the piercing frowns and slights of heaven, and the dreadful assaults of Satan. I had, in my unspeakable joy, defied both the devil and sin. The sucking child had played on the hole of the asp; but it is the weaned child that shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. I had, in my prosperity, said, "Surely I shall never be moved; for thou, Lord, of thy goodness, hast made my hill so strong." After the expiration of the above term I found the corruptions of my heart begin to stir, and appear in sight. John could not be more terrified at the appearance of the beast with seven heads and ten horns, than I was at the appearance of these. I

cried mightily to God, and down they all went, and out of sight. Soon after they appeared again; and I prayed, and all these little foxes, that spoiled the vines, sculked into their holes. But soon they appeared more formidable, first one and then another; and, before I could get one out of sight by prayer, there would appear ten more, till I quite despaired of driving out these old inhabitants of the land. And now my comforts fled, and the Lord left me; and Satan came to present to my view the holiness of a real saint, and how widely I differed from one of that happy number, by suggesting such texts as these: "He that is born of God sinneth not;" "They do no iniquity; they walk in his law," &c. And with this temptation also was I beset, namely, that I had inadvertently sinned against the Holy Ghost. This cut my girdle. I cast away all my confidence, repented of my presumption in claiming Christ as mine, and relinquished, as far as unbelief could go, all pretensions to any part or lot in the great salvation of Christ. At this time the Lord returned with double love and treble glory, and revived the whole work, and brought it all forth to light again, and led me to compare spiritual things with spiritual. His work within, with his word of promise without, and what I read in his book, I found to be engraved on my heart, and I appeared to be established like the everlasting hills.

And now I must tell my friend how this trial came upon me. I had been for some time turning over in my mind such passages as these; "You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." "It is through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God." "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." "He that will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me." I knew that I had none of these exercises, and therefore concluded all was not right with me; that I was not in the footsteps of the flock; and, fearing of coming short of the promised rest, and of any thing being lacking in my faith that is essential to salvation, I secretly

wished for trials and troubles, and for such tribulation as lay in the way to the kingdom; and soon after the above-described desertion came on. But, after the above-mentioned revival of the work, my mountain seemed so strong, that I thought, as before, that I should never be moved again. But, soon after, another spiritual desertion came on, attended with wrath, bitterness of soul, legal bondage, and intolerable hardness of heart. And with this a very strange fire was kindled, which I never had felt before, and that was spiritual jealousy; and this stirred up the most bitter rebellion, and laid me open to the cruel assaults of Satan. All these came on at once. This sad complication of miseries so confounded me, and drank up my spirits, that I was obliged to quit my lawful labour, and to wander into the fields and woods. At length the Lord came again, as before, and brought his whole work on my soul to light again; and I cursed my folly in giving way to Satan and to unbelief, and for calling in question the faithfulness and truth of the unchangeable Jehovah; and secretly wished for another onset with the devil, not doubting but I should quit myself like a man. But, as soon as the next attack came on, I turned back in the day of battle, although harnessed and carrying a bow; for the devil, varying his temptation 1b3c s, surprised me on that side where I was most secure. And hence it appeared as though some strange thing had happened unto me. For some months I went on, up and down in the balance of the sanctuary, this way. And I learnt one lesson in this field of action, and that was, that the Lord's strength was made perfect in weakness. For, when I resolved and mustered up all my courage, I never stood at all, out fell when the first dart reached me; but, when I feared, trembled, and cried mightily to my God and Saviour, he hath strengthened the weak against the strong, so that the weak hath come even to the fortress. I have, at such times, been enabled even to resemble a soldier of Christ. I have rebuked the devil for his insolence and blasphemy; I have cursed him and defied him, in the name of the living God. I told him he was damned, and

his punishment would certainly come on him, and that my eyes should see it; and he could not deny it, nor reply against it. However, these continual changes, one day at the gates of heaven, and the next day in the belly of hell, led me to conclude that it was not pleasing to God that I was so insatiable after comfort; because I perceived that my joys got more and more short-lived, and my bitter seasons were more and more lengthened out. The day of prosperity appeared but an hour, and the day of adversity a month. My heart was well acquainted with its own bitterness; nor did strangers intermeddle with my joy. Yet I secretly wished that my feet stood in a more even path. But must I tell you all the secret? must I disclose my own shame? Take it then. I thought in my heart, and muttered out with my lips, the following perverseness: "I believe the Lord grudges me my comforts, or else he would never suffer me to be so buffeted by the devil every time they are gone; and I would sooner be without them than go on so." And the Lord took me at my word; for the sweet breast of consolation was immediately withdrawn, to my great grief, and no small mortification; and I found it just as the evangelical prophet represents it: "Whom shall he teach knowledge! And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little," Isa. xxviii. 9, 10. The breast being withdrawn, I searched the scriptures day and night, to see what security I could get, what confirmation and establishment the word of God afforded. I compared his work on my soul with his word, and especially those parts where he promises to make a new covenant with us, to pardon sin, and give us a new heart, &c.; and I found the work to be genuine, and that it would stand the test of every text, except such as these: "He that is born of God sinneth not." "They also do no iniquity; they walk in his ways," Psalm cxix. 3. These I could not make out, as they seemed to assert nothing less than perfection. At these I often

staggered; and they were sad stumbling blocks to me. However, I considered the decrees and purposes of God, his covenants, promises, faithfulness, and truth; the immutability of his nature, the finished work of Christ, the oaths of God, the Spirit's work, and his faithfulness to his children in every age; and got much light, and gathered much strength, this way; and the blessed Spirit who before was my comforter, was now a spirit of revelation and understanding to me; and having lost all my milk and honey, I fed upon strong meat; the breast was taken away, and knowledge and understanding became my food. I had before grown in grace, and now I grew in knowledge; and my mind was much employed in heavenly meditation on the glorious truths of the gospel. But this did not afford that nourishment, warmth, and heavenly sweetness, to the heart, which the other did. I often sat down and considered the days of old, when "the visitations of God preserved my spirit, when his glory was fresh in me, and when the dew lay all night upon my branch;" and wept, sighed, whined, and sobbed after the milk and honey. But the Holy Spirit, at such times, would produce submission and resignation in me to the will of God, and suggest to my mind, that when I have finished my course, I should have my heart full of that sweet fare, and that for evermore; which made me long for death. At these times I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul was even as a weaned child, Psalm cxxxii. 2. About that period I was working in the coal-barge, and suffering hunger, cold, and almost nakedness; besides the conflicts within, persecutions without, and the loss of that which to me was dearer than life. It pleased God to pity and visit me again. I had an old lumber-room, where I often withdrew when my burden was too heavy for me to bear; and as sure as I entered that place, so sure did the Lord of all lords visit me. He would come down as rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth; till I could compare it to nothing but what I had read of entering into the holy of holies, when the glory of the Lord had filled the

house of the Lord. O what condescension for the Most High to humble himself to take notice of such worms of the dust!

After many of these soul-reviving and soul-establishing visits, those trials, which are peculiar to the ministry, came on, attended with legal bondage, and various temptations and oppositions; and beset I was with every class of heretics, till I went, like the woman the Saviour healed, bowed together for several years; till what with trouble, real want, and hard labour, I was at the brink of the grave, and longed for it; but it came not. At length it pleased God to renew my youth like the eagle's, and he supplied me with temporal necessities, equipped me with truth and fortitude, and gave me a great desire to be useful; and he soon let me see that I did not labour in vain. And now this became my food; it was my meat and drink to do his will, and to see his work prosper. And this led me to walk steady with my Clod in peace and equity; and, having obtained help from him, I continue to this day. Thus, Delilah like, your three succeeding epistles have drawn the secret out of my heart. And after all, what is it? Why, divine power lodged in a lock of human hair; or to speak in New Testament language, it is God's strength made perfect in man's weakness. Adieu. I must attend the household; but cannot help subscribing myself,

Ever yours,

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter XVI.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

I RECEIVED safe your very valuable epistle; and I hope you will excuse my not acknowledging the receipt of it before this time. I assure you it has not been for want of inclination, but want of time. My hands have been fully employed in nursing, which hath been to me a sore trial. The Lord has visited my dear little boy with a disorder which we feared would prove fatal. And under this trial the Canaanites, which are left in the land to be as thorns in my side, made me severely feel their power, assisted by Satan their ally, who appeared at their head, and who made such an inroad upon me as greatly disquieted my spirits. The rebellion of my heart was stirred up, and hard thoughts of God followed. I could not give up the child; and Satan suggested such things to my mind concerning the eternal state of the boy, should he die under the curse of God's righteous law, as I believe I never shall let come out of the doors of my lips. But I assure you they were such as rent the caul of my heart; and, though I could not give the child up, yet I trembled at the thoughts of asking for his life. I was pressed beyond measure, I could only say to the Lord, "Thou knowest my heart, what I am by nature; and that nothing but these rank weeds will ever be produced by me, unless thou art pleased, by the operations of thy Spirit, to work in me that submission and resignation to thy will f7d which shall glorify thee." The Lord appeared for the child, and hath restored him to us again. But submission and resignation were not found in my heart. His Excellency sent me your epistle, which you directed to be left with him, with the following direction on it: "To her Majesty the Queen of the Beggars, value a thousand pounds." But, when I had read the contents, I was constrained to enhance the value; for I found

the price of it far above rubies. I thank you kindly for it. I thought of an old proverb, viz. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed."

I think there can but little befall me in the path of tribulation but what you have shewed me already. You seem to intimate that you think I may be a stumbling block to those whose joys to not rise so high as God is pleased to raise mine. Indeed, it is true that some envy me, and some are filled with jealousy. But envy and jealousy seem to me to be two different things. Where the latter is working, I believe it will be a means, under God, of bringing the same blessings into their souls. These will not rejoice when I am brought low, but will be the first that will help me, by their prayers, that I may be raised up again. But where envy works, nothing would gratify these more than to see me down. But this is like to bring nothing into their own souls. To the former I feel my whole heart and soul going out; but to the latter I cannot find a union.

Something in your Letter quite surprised me, and that is, to think that, after you had been led in such a sweet path for ten months, and under such manifestations of divine love, you should again be brought into such darkness as to doubt of the work on your soul being real. Had you not related it as experienced by yourself, I should have staggered at it. But, if God has dealt so with you, I fear I shall not escape. But it is such an evil day as I would wish to put far from me. Should such a time ever come, I think I shall find your epistle to be of great use to me. But I should never have thought there was a probability of any thing like it befalling me. To be sure at present my mountain seems to stand strong; the place of my defence is the mountain of rocks; and God is truly gracious to me; for I have not had one day of real darkness in my own soul since the time we all met at Gasson's Bower, where the Lord met me by the way, as he did the disciples in their journey to Emmaus. I saw his Excellency yesterday. We are

reaping the fruits of his labour. He came to us, after his long absence as I called it, in the fullness of the blessings of the gospel of peace. I am glad to hear we are to have another printed sermon from you next week. I found your last much blessed to me. I shall be glad to hear that you are coming among us again; and I hope you will favour me with another epistle soon; for I feel myself disappointed if I do not hear from you once a week. I should be glad to know, in your next, if I am at liberty to shew your last epistle to our friends: they know I have had one. I believe his Excellency has told them. But I have given them to understand that they shall not see it without your leave. The young stripling from the Bower declared yesterday that he would not let me be at peace till he had seen it. I was glad to hear, by my sister's Letter, that you had not been afflicted so badly with cold and hoarseness this winter as you have been some winters past. May the Lord continue you in bodily health and much soul prosperity, is the fervent prayer of

Your affectionate sister in the bonds of the gospel,

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter XVII.

To Philomela, of the King's Dale

THE epistle of my sister is come safe, and now lies before me. It is, according to the prophet Habakkuk, a song of various things, sung in various tunes. Your days have been sorrow, and your travail grief. Call this time of adversity Gad, for there is a troop behind; or call them the beginning of sorrows, for unbelief will often tell you that there will be no end of them. Satan is a skilful adversary. He can alter both his appearance and his influence. While I lay in the dark regions of the shadow of death, under the arrests of divine justice, and filled with fury and the rebukes of my God, he worked constantly upon the hardness of my heart, the carnal enmity of my mind, and on that soul-destroying sin of unbelief, in which I was shut up. He took occasion to multiply his accusations by the sins which stood before mine eyes, the burden of guilt which I felt, and the wrath of the law which worked in me. And I knew that this was the devil and the works of him. But, after my deliverance had been proclaimed, my calling made clear, and mine election sure, he came to me again, so altered in appearance, in language, and in influence, that I really did not know my old acquaintance. He came not now in his sable garb, but in his shining robe; not to attend my funeral to hell and the grave, but as a friend at my wedding; not to accuse, but to give me counsel; not to drive, but to draw; not to sink me into despair, but to lift me up to the wind, and make me ride upon it; not to reproach me, but to praise me; not to tell me what an awful rebel I had been, but what a saint I then was. Satan had changed his voice. And surely among them that are born of women there had not appeared a greater wonder than Parson Sack. I, not in the least suspecting this strange visitor to be one of the king of

Babylon's ambassadors, was pleased with his coming as much as Hezekiah was, and shewed him all my precious things; for he came not with heavy tidings, but with smooth things; not as a destroyer, but as a builder up. He treated of the goodness and safety of my state: of the height of divine favour in which I stood, and of my certain arrival at the desired haven. From this he descended to the small number of God's elect; very small, when compared to the world at large. And as he preached, so he endeavoured to apply the doctrine. He worked his bottle-screw into my natural affections, and made my bowels sound. He set before me all my little ones, and my dame, as not included in the bond of the covenant; and then operated upon and influenced every tender feeling I had. My compassion, earnest desires, &c. &c. began to rise up and flow out at such a rate, just as Milton describes the lust of Adam and Eve working in them, after they had eaten the forbidden fruit, till they conceived it was new divinity springing up within them. And so I thought that my heart was filled with grace. Having worked me up to the highest pitch of natural affection for my wife and children, he then left the old hen and chicken, and led my mind abroad to my friends and relations then to my old acquaintance; next to many tender-hearted, pitiful, and well-meaning people which I knew in the world. And still my heart enlarged, and, as he presented them to view, so I took them in. Then he came to the nations at large. Still my heart opened and extended as he brought them to bear upon my mind. Then the poor heathens were presented to my view, until my bowels sounded like an harp, not only for Moab, but for all these. And then the irrevocable decrees of God were set before me, just as they are set forth by the Arminians. And next the devils were presented to me as objects of my pity. And this last chamber of imagery discovered the cheat. Satan could no longer be hid; and I remembered his former fiery darts, and soon was delivered from this snare of the fowler. However, this was of use to me in the ministry; for from that time I knew most assuredly who it

was that instructed, furnished, equipped, and sent out, the whole herd of Arminian teachers, for sure I am that it is the devil transformed that supplies them all.

Some time after this he paid me another visit, similar to last. At that time I was in the ministry. He came now as parson-maker, to instruct me how to proceed in the important work; and that was, to draw no lines between saints and sinners; to make no applications; to enforce no marks, evidences, love-tokens, nor sure tokens; to insist upon no criterions, characteristics, infallible proofs, signs, nor touchstones; and then I should give no offence, nor should I raise any bars of prejudice against me, nor have any stigma fixed upon my character; my usefulness would be extensive, and my reputation a sweet savour to all. I should endeavour to cast my net so as to take in all that come within the walls of my meeting, and endeavour to win all to love me; and those who love a believer are passed from death to life. This plan I intended to adopt. But, when I was in the work, the fire of zeal, of love, fervour, holy fear, boldness, and fortitude, flowed into me; so that, instead of saying, A confederacy, I became a divider and scatterer wherever I went. The hypocrite hissed, and the honest soul felt the energy; and soon God led me to see this stratagem of the devil; and I learnt this lesson by it, that of all the workmen of God, and of all the works of God under heaven, except the death of Christ, a minister of the Spirit, and the Holy Ghost's work on the souls of men, are the greatest enemies to Satan. He has no objection to external reformation, if there be no internal regeneration. It is the Holy Spirit that casts out the strong man armed, takes away his armour wherein he trusted, spoils his Louse, and takes the prey from the mighty. Having escaped this snare, through the good hand of my God upon me, he paid me one more visit in his counterfeit rays; at which time he set before me all the real and imaginary evils and dangers that would attend me in the perilous work of the ministry; the oppositions from the world,

from heretics and hypocrites; the hunger, cold, and nakedness, that I was exposed to; the treachery of pretended friends; the difficult work of getting to be clear in the greatest mysteries of religion, and of escaping all errors; the danger of my life by the way, and of death at the end, in a hundred forms; together with the uncertainty of the Lord's presence, aid, and support, which he argued from the sad desertions which had lately befell me. He then shewed me my own safety, the goodness of my state, and the happiness which, would occur if I withdrew to some lonely place, and kept all the dealings of God with me locked up in my own breast. But, not succeeding, he soon made good his predictions; for there was not a tool, falsely called a gospel minister, in town or country, but what was barking, biting, warning or cautioning people against me. And this has continued, without intermission, for twenty-four years and upwards; and I should think it an ill omen should it cease, which I am in no fear or danger of, seeing the devil has stocked the nation with so many novices, whom he puffs up with pride till they fall under the same sentence that fell upon him.

The bowels of compassion and the inordinate affection that you felt for the child, and the rebellion against God that attended it, you may safely conclude were the effects of a visit from this transformed devil. For God is as well able to regenerate a child as a man; and can perform that good work in the last moment now, as well as in the thief upon the cross. "His hand is not shortened." Besides, you have no scripture to prohibit or forbid your praying for your child, nor yet for the life of the child, supposing you conclude with "Not my will, but thine be done." And, if we cannot say this from the heart, then we can pray for submission that we may do it. David fasted, cried, and prayed, all day and night long for his child, though God, by his prophet, had declared it should die. He prayed even against the revealed will of God. But your prayer would

have been according to his will. This is plain, because the child is restored to you again, even without being prayed for.

Your nice distinction between jealousy and envy I must leave to the learned. I believe that Rachel was provoked to jealousy at the fruitfulness of Leah, and thought that she stood higher in the divine favour than herself; and the consequence was, that she envied her sister. The apostles were provoked to jealousy when James and John craved their seats on the right and left hand of Christ in his kingdom: and the other ten were filled with indignation against the two brethren. But, you may reply, Wisdom says, "Who can stand before envy?" True. And in another breath she tells you what stirs it up: "Jealousy is the rage of a man; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance." Solomon had learnt this by experience. God sent his prophet to Jeroboam to tell him that he should be king over ten tribes. This was a scourge to Solomon for his idolatry: and this provoked Solomon to such rage and jealousy that he sought to kill Jeroboam. The latter could not stand before the envy of the former, and therefore, to save his life, he fled into Egypt.

If thou wilt nurse, suckle, swaddle, prate, and preach, go on: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand, for thou canst not tell which shall prosper, either this or that, either the envious or the jealous; "or whether they shall both be alike good." But thou wilt be a better judge of this than thou now art when thy preaching season is over; for there is a time to keep silence, as well as a time to speak. Thou wast not very fit for the pulpit in this thy last high fit of the fever; but that was nothing, either in weight or duration, to that which is yet to come. Walking with the footmen wearied Jeremiah; but afterwards he was called to contend with horses: and, when he was tired out in a land of peace, he was ordered to cope with the swellings of Jordan. God will have us at his feet; and it is not a little crossing and trying that will

bring us there, and keep us there. To be stripped of all comfort, and to be laid in irons for a whole year, and this attended with intolerable hardness of heart; to be left free among the dead, and be given up to the influence of a sleepy devil, who shall give you a dose of his opium under every prayer that is put up, and under every sermon that is preached; this, this will be worse than all the afflictions that have befallen little Isaac. So I conclude, and so you shall confess. Call it one more secret from the locks of Samson.

In the Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter XVIII.

To Noctua Aurita, of the Desert.

THE language of my heart at this time is, Was ever one favoured with such a friend, counsellor, and guide, in this world before? There may be; but this I can be certain of, that there never was one so unworthy of it. Every epistle I receive from you knits and unites my heart more and more to you. O what a sweet bond is this which knits every member of Christ to each other, and to their head! Your last favour has unmasked Satan to my view in such a manner as must enrage him greatly. Little did I think that the inordinate affections, and the sounding of the bowels, came from him. I have felt something of it before, and do to this moment. O, my dear friend, pray for me, that I may have wisdom given me from above that I may not be ignorant of his devices! Never did I see him in so formidable a view before. Surely he desires to have me, that he may sift me as wheat; and, if the prayer of the great High Priest does not prevail on my behalf, I must fall by his temptations. Your epistle brought to remembrance many visits paid to me in his white robes during these six months past. O what praise is due to God for keeping me from falling by this snare of the fowler! I have had many of the lectures on election which you mention, and the doctrine applied, and his ends answered, in my last trial. Rebellion enough I felt. Surely he might withdraw for a season; he was sure he left me very miserable enough. You have, indeed, prophesied of a dark path I have to travel, which has wrought some discouragement in my heart. I am sure you will be a true prophet in all your predictions, and not one word of all you have spoken shall fall to the ground. Satan seems to me to be the most dangerous when he comes to bloat up the soul with

pride. And I have found him approach in this way when I have been much in the enjoyment of divine love, as Mr. Hart says,

The heart uplifts with God's own gift,
And makes even grace a snare.

I felt so much of this about seven months ago as made me abhor myself. This was a little before my journey to the Bower, when God met me by the way. Our dear pastor made an observation in the pulpit, about a week before I received your last favour, which struck me very forcibly. It was this: that pride goeth before the destruction of a sinner, and a haughty spirit before the fall of a saint: and observed, that it was the devil's aim to get his on this ground, and then he was sure to procure our fall. And your mentioning in yours the ways and means he makes use of to effect this, and that from your experience, was very seasonable to me: and I found that, "A word fitly spoken is as apples of gold in pictures of silver;" for the Lord makes me to fear this more than any thing. I am sensible there can be no safety but at the feet of Jesus. But true it is, as you observe, it is not a little crossing and trying that will keep me there. I find I am wrong in my views of envy and jealousy. Pardon me, dear Sir; I have, perhaps, spoken for want of light. But you are looking forward to a time when, you say, I shall be a better judge of it, even when my preaching time is over. Indeed, Sir, I aspire to no such thing as preaching. As you say, prate I do, and that when I should keep silence, which is known by the effects, by its bringing on me hatred and envy instead of love. I am often brought into snares by my tongue, which is an unruly member, and I have smarted both for my speaking and my keeping silence. But, if I am to be left free among the dead, laid irons a whole year, and be given up to the sleepy devil, I believe my mouth will be shut with a witness. If any thing less than this would do it, I should be thankful.

However, I hope ever to have an interest in your prayers, and to be favoured with your correspondence, which I feel are among my greatest privileges. Shall hope to hear from you very soon, and believe me to remain

Your very sincere and affectionate friend in the bonds of the gospel,

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter XIX.

To Philomela, of the King's Dale

I HAVE long been to thee as a dumb man, in whose mouth are no reproofs, having been much engaged. But you know there is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;" and there is "a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing." You have been, upon your returning to your heavenly Father, embraced, enrobed, entertained, and adorned, and long indulged with the soul-reviving melody of Let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And this music and dancing hath long continued with thee, during which time I could only be a fellow-helper of your joy, or a furtherer of your joy of faith. But now, perhaps, "The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music, the joy of our heart is ceased, our dance is turned into mourning." But, when the truth is received in the love of it; when the testimony is bound up in the heart by the bond of the everlasting covenant, which is God's eternal love in Christ Jesus accompanying the word of grace; then we are constrained, however coyly we might put it away before, we are constrained, I say, to embrace it, being attended with the comforting seal of assurance; for it comes "in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;" which seal ratifies, confirms, and makes the promise sure to all the seed. And then what 10b9 remain? Why, the hand of faith is stretched out to subscribe the evidences, both that which is open, and that which is sealed; namely, the whole word of God, which appears open to us, and is yet to be fulfilled, and that which is sealed on our hearts, as being fulfilled already. And this setting to the seal is to be attended with the confession of the mouth unto salvation, without either an if or a but in it: "One shall say, I am the Lord's; another

shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Every one that sends a Letter to another, giving an account of his deliverance, and of the assurance of his faith in Christ Jesus, subscribes with his hand to the honour and glory of God, as being faithful to his word, and rich in mercy. And he does no less who, believing in his heart, makes confession with his mouth unto salvation. While these things are carrying on in the soul, the good old wine flies about, and the glorious days of the Son of Man afford nothing but new love-tokens, fresh or new discoveries; but, if they last never so long, and we rejoice in them all, yet we must "remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." How passive, resigned, composed, and tranquil, is the clay in the hand of the potter while the lump is formed into another vessel, in order to shew forth his praise ! But O the evil days that have rolled over my head since! For many years did I keep looking back to the munitions, of rocks, and to the views that I then had of the King in his beauty, and of the land that is very far off. But the bare and barren remembrance of them at last only made me lament my loss, and sometimes aggravated my misery; for, though I earnestly begged to have these restored, and to be upheld by his free Spirit, yet he appeared in this matter inflexible, as if it retest not be so done in our country. But the following things abode with me; that is, a full persuasion that the work was genuine; a good hope of the great reward promised; my mind completely rescued from the dark and dismal regions; nor did unappeased wrath and unatoned guilt ever enter my conscience, or sink my soul in the horrible pit afterward; though legal bondage and fatherly anger have often fell to my lot. But a good hope through grace counterpoises these, and keeps the soul at a par, or hanging at least in an even balance. The new birth, my sister, is to us the testimony of Jesus. "How can these things be?" saith Nicodemus. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not

our witness." Where this change is made, where ever perfect love casts out fear and torment, there is the testimony of Jesus; and, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," Rev. xix. 10. Yea, an earnest of the future inheritance the first-fruits of the glorious harvest, or of the harvest of glory and faith itself "is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" and is attended with a train of forerunners which lead to perfect day. These things abide with us. But, alas; bonds and afflictions abide also; and these make such a medley of bitter sweets, which are strange things to us. Now I shall expect to hear how you go on, and to have an honest account, whether any of my former predictions came to pass or not; or whether the oil of joy continues springing without any abatement; whether the banqueting-house affords the same profusion; whether the banner displayed is still in view; and whether the same hearty welcome of "Eat, O friends! drink; yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" sounds still in thine ears, attended with the same inward fullness and satisfaction as usual. In hope of a solution, I conclude, in the bonds of the better covenant,

Thine in Him,

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter XX.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

I received safe your kind favour, and kindly do I thank you for the same; and glad I am to find you bear me on your mind. In compliance to your request, I take this opportunity of informing you of my spiritual welfare. I have not to inform you that I am in the banqueting-house: no; those sweet seasons are over; for my Beloved has withdrawn himself, and is gone, and has left me a silly dove without a heart, as you warned me of in a former Letter; and I am going mourning without the sun. He has hid himself with a cloud in his anger, and my soul is melted because of trouble. He has taken the bag of money with him, and there seems to be a famine in the land, and I am in want. As you observe, the bare remembrance of those past seasons wherein I lived under his shadow, is only an aggravation of my misery. I well know now, and that by bitter experience, the truth of your former predictions, much of them having been fulfilled during these two months past; and none but God himself could have supported me in the perilous path I am called to walk in. I have been brought so low as almost to cast away my confidence; though, in my joys, I have said, numbers of times, I was sure I should never be shaken with respect to my state. But this language is purged from me by very sharp strokes. Indeed, I have sometimes a little light given me, from the word, that the path I am brought into is the path of tribulation that leads to the kingdom; and a little light God has given me lately by a very particular dream. God still instructs me by dreams and visions of the night. Some part of it is now fulfilling, and some part remains to be fulfilled; and much does God lead me to watch his hand, which is with me at this time. It would carry me far beyond the limits of a Letter to give you a particular account of God's dealing with

me; and perhaps it is God's will that I should keep his dealings with me to myself. I am sure I have wished a thousand times lately I had never opened my mouth to any one about the work of God with me. I know it has involved me in many snares. However, nothing teaches like experience. I have been a little strengthened by those words in Job, xxvi. 2, 3, wherein he says of God, "How hast thou helped him that is without power? How savest thou the arm that hath no strength? How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom? and how hadst thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?" I am brought most sensibly to feel my want of help, power, strength, and wisdom; aha I never before so saw my need of Christ in his office as a counsellor: and it strengthened me a little that he is styled by the prophet the Wonderful Counsellor. I think never did a poor soul stand more in need of his help, in all his offices and characters, than I do at this present time. Those lines of Mr. Hart's are truly applicable to me:

Weaker than the bruised reed,
Help I every moment need.

I hope still to be favoured with an interest in your prayers, that I may be kept, guided, and directed in all spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, and preserved unto his heavenly kingdom; and may the best of spiritual blessings continually be vouchsafed to you, is the prayer of

Your truly affectionate sister in the bonds of the gospel,

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter XXI.

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

I AM still kept looking out at my study window, with my heart not a little set on my intended journey, to the King's Dale. But my weak state of body, and the long, miserable, wet season, not a little discourages me. I long to see and know how you all go on. I am just like an old hen, which hath got more chickens than she can cover with her feathers; for my thoughts are all over the nation, and I am always afraid of the hawks and kites. But this is indulging fear where no fear is; for under his feathers his children shall trust; his truth shall be their shield and buckler. I want to see the King's herald; for, if I do not see nor hear from him every four or five days, all is not right. O, when shall that happy time arrive, and that blessed mansion be inhabited, where the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick! where those dismal changes from cold to hot, from dry to wet, shall be no more; nor the soul be clogged any more with this worst of burdens, a crazy tabernacle, and a body of death. I sit, and fret, and grieve, to see the weather so bad, and myself so weak and feeble; my thoughts can fly, but I am stall in the study. What a sensible weight is the body to a soul enlarged! The one is all over heaven, earth, and hell; and the other quite immovable; always incapable, more or less, of executing the soul's inventions. The elephant and the greyhound, the dove and the swine, never were more unequally matched than a body of flesh and blood, and a soul born from above. I decree many things, but they are not established unto me; I purpose, but my purposes are broken off. "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." It is a blessing that God works in us to will, seeing he often accepts the will for the deed, as he did the will of Abraham at the offering of Isaac, and the good-will of David

respecting building the temple. But it is a grief to me that so excellent a couple should ever be absent from each other. Willing and doing are not always hand in hand. The former is generally found, but the latter is not. "To will is present," says Paul, but not the doing. Perhaps the reason may be this: the devil cannot hinder us from willing, but he often hinders us from doing. "I was coming once and again," says Paul, "but Satan hindered." Again: I can will without the body, but the body is often wanted in performing; and, like Pharaoh's wheels, draws heavily, when the soul, like the chariot of Aminadib, or like Jehu, drives furiously. O this frail tabernacle, this busy devil, and this wretched law in the members! I must conclude in this strait between two; and these two make me often waddle. I am ready to halt, and my sorrows are continually before me.

Ever thine,

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter XXII.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

We received safe your last favour; and I was sorry at the account of your indisposition. Hope it has pleased the Lord ere this to have restored you to health again. Hope you will again have your health established. With respect to myself. I find the world, and every thing in it, is against me, besides the flesh and the devil. But the worst of all calamities that ever befel me is, that God hath hid his blessed face from me. He has fenced up my ways that I cannot pass; he has set darkness in all my paths; he hideth himself with a cloud in his anger; and at times I am ready to fear he is gone for ever, and never will return more. I at present can find no book suit me better than your "Child of Liberty in legal Bondage." It is my companion; and sometimes I think you must have wrote that book on purpose for me, that I might not quite sink under my present distress. Your last Letter is a composition of the same bitter ingredients, which you have brought forth from your own experience, not only your former, but your present sensations under your present trial. Pardon me if I tell you I tried to suck some sweetness from it. And it has encouraged me a little to hope that I may be brought through; for these have been my companions by day and by night, for these five months past; and I really do believe that I am not near through this perilous path. O, my dear friend, had e9d I but attended to the sound advice you gave me in the second Letter you wrote to me, it had been better with me at present than it is, and that was to keep secret the dealings of God with me, and watch every advance he made towards me, and then, you told me, I should have rejoicing in myself alone! But I have been wiser in my own eyes than seven men that could render a reason. I was not then aware that self was working at the bottom of all;

and I find true that saying of the wise man, "A man's pride shall bring him low." And low I am at present, and as fast in the cords of legal bondage as ever a poor soul was. You say, in the book that is my companion, "In this cloudy and dark day to be favoured with faith in exercise, but one minute, enough to banter the enemy, and predict a future sun rising, is a blessing indeed." This has been the case with me two or three times during the first five months, when God was pleased to shine with, a ray of light on a part of his word, and give me to see something of the end for which he was thus dealing with me. But now it seems to be taken from me, and I have had nothing of that for these three months past, though I can say, with you, that I do not fee. unappeased wrath or unatoned guilt work in my conscience. These ingredients are not in my cup, which were in my former bondage. But severely do I feel the cruel flames of jealousy burn with a most vehement heat. Nor did I know that it was an ingredient that worked in the heart under a spirit of bondage till I read it in the book my companion. The Tuesday evening you came to my house you seemed to come as a prophet sent of God, and did predict to me the coming of him whom my soul loveth. But the language of my heart, though I did not utter it with my mouth, was the same as the Shunamite's to Elisha, "Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid;" which was the effect of unbelief in her, and in me; and, indeed, I am so under the power of unbelief, that I cannot give credit to any thing but what seems to make against me. But certainly true it is, that since that time the darkness has gathered thicker upon me, and I am holden faster in my fetters than I was before, but no light to see where I am. And nothing but almighty power can rend the veil, and bring me forth from this captivity the second time. It will be matter of comfort to know if God lays my case near your heart. I hope you will never cease to pray for me. And do, my dear friend, make it your petition to God that he would be pleased to shine upon the work he has done upon me by his own Spirit, that I may not be deceived in this matter,

and take the work of Satan for the work of the Spirit of God; for I must tell you I have not light to see the place from whence I did fall; and I know it is only God that can discover this to me. This is a confused jumble. I am almost ashamed to send it to you; but hope you bear with me and pardon me; for I am so dark, and feel my mind so confused, that I am not able to express my own feelings. Accept my thanks for all your kind favours bestowed on one so unworthy; and, if God should give you any thing to send me, I shall be exceeding glad to receive it, and likewise to hear how your health is at present; and believe me to remain

Your very sincere and affectionate friend and afflicted sister,

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter XXIII.

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

THINE epistle came safe to hand, savouring sweetly of a second benefit. Refreshing from the presence of the Lord attended it. It was a rich perfume. His name, like an ointment poured forth, came with it. Our unbelief shall never make the faith of God without effect; for, if we believe not, he still abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself. Moreover, God will honour his own ministering servants, whom he knows honour him; nor will he let their word fall to the ground; for he will confirm the word of his servants, and perform the counsel of his messengers. The work of God on the souls of his people shall abide for ever. He will carry on the good work begun; he will perfect that which concerns us, and never forsake the work of his own hands. And now, as God has hitherto fulfilled all that I have predicted to thee, and hath made me manifest in thy conscience, and hath given thee a place in my heart to live and die with thee, which joining and knitting together is the work of God's Spirit alone, and is always attended with the bands of peace and love; by strengthening of which bands the Lord is pleased to communicate nourishment to supply every joint, that the whole body may increase, and edify itself in love; it is from this work that Wisdom receives his revenue; all his tributes of praise and thanksgiving spring from hence. He reaps no harvest but from what he sows; no fruits but from his own plantation. With this work he is particularly and more immediately concerned; for, in carrying on this, all his attributes are engaged; and by the faithful and true witness it will be performed and perfected that God may display the riches of his grace in glory by Christ Jesus. Now, that thou mayest know what the various branches of this good work are, and not be wholly ignorant of it, and that thou mayest

have somewhat to answer any person who shall appear to glory, but not in heart; I will drop thee a few hints about it, and leave thee to consider the matter, and to compare notes. I mean to compare spiritual things with spiritual; that is, spiritual works within with spiritual words in the book. And, if we take heed to these things, and cleanse our way according to his word, we shall come to a point: for whatsoever the Spirit of God wrote on the hearts of his apostles and prophets, he, by those instruments, wrote the same in the Bible; and an exact copy of it is written on the fleshly tables of all believing hearts; and, when this is done, the quickening Spirit makes us feel the impression, and afterwards shines gradually upon the word, that we may see that the internal impression exactly agrees with the external revelation. And, when the contents on the paper tally with the impression on the heart, then we are the pillars and ground of the truth, and may safely conclude that the mercy of God in Christ Jesus shall be built up for ever, and, in the glorification of our souls and bodies, Truth shall be settled in heaven. The unction on our souls is twofold: love and joy are the effects of the anointing within: and the anointing our eyes with eye-salve is done that we may see, in the word, what he has done on the heart; and that anointing "teacheth us all things, and is true, and is no lie." And, as he hath taught us, we shall abide in him; that is, we shall ever abide in the favour, and under the operations, of the holy Spirit of promise, that the offering of us up may be acceptable, we being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Now for a few hints upon those things which God calls his own work. He says, "I am the Lord which search the hearts and try the reins of the children of men." And this work you have an account of by the prophets. "I will search Jerusalem as with candles, and will punish the men that are settled on their lees." In allusion to this our Lord called the apostles the light of the world; and asks whether candles were lighted up to be put under a bushel; and tells them to let their light shine before men. And by these he searched Jerusalem, as you see in Peter's

audience, who, when cut to the heart, cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?" The things for the which they were reprov'd were made manifest by the light that did appear, for, "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." And, when the elect of God among that people were searched into, searched out, and looked up, he then punished the rest that were settled upon their lees of self-righteousness. Another branch of this work of the Lord is, to give us a sight, as well as a feeling sense, of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; for so he says, "I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thee. Now, consider this, ye that forget God." This is done to make us the more sensible of our pardon when it comes, after we have been sufficiently humbled and brought down. The purging of our guilt and filth is called removing the burden; and chasing our sin from before the eyes of our mind, is termed a blotting out our transgressions as a cloud; for, as it is sin that separates from God, purging them is making us nigh by the blood of Christ; and so it follows, "I have blotted out thy transgressions as a cloud; return unto me for I have redeemed thee." But to return. Under this convincing and convicting work a kind of legal process is carried on between God and the sinner, in which God appears both judge and witness, as you read: "And I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, and turn aside the stranger from his right, and that fear not me, saith the Lord." The law is sent home to conscience, and we are summoned to appear at the bar of equity. "Come," saith God, "and let us reason together;" for that is all we are capable of while, in the glass of the law, our sins appear as scarlet and crimson, which sets forth their deep stain and dreadful dye. And here he holds us under this fiery trial till our mouths are stopped, our souls humbled, and we become altogether guilty before God. And, when he has stripped us of all our false coverings, he makes us willing, in the day of his power, to be saved in his own way. And here

we stand willing enough to be saved, and put our mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. But, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." Nevertheless, under all this sharp exercise God supports us; which is called instructing us with a strong hand, that we may dare to be singular, and not say, A confederacy to any enemy of the truth, or stranger to the power of it. When God hath thus chastened us, and taught us out of his law, he then gives us rest from the days of adversity, by leading us to the foundation, that he hath laid in Zion, which is called the Rock higher than we. Hence the Saviour's assertion, "It is written, And they shall be all taught of God. Every one, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me; and he that cometh I will in no wise cast out." This is God the Father's teaching, and is always attended with God's blessing; as it is written, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest him out of thy law." But to proceed. God having made us willing in the day of his power, he then presents his dear Son to our view, as the only hope and refuge that is left; and all our desires are made to centre there, and now he works in us to do as well as to will. He then makes bare his arm, and we believe his report. This is fulfilling the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with power; and to this faith the Spirit bears witness. This is another branch of God's work, as saith the Saviour, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." This faith gives Christ a residence in our hearts, who comes with all his saving benefits. And this Paul speaks of when he says, "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me." At the reception of Christ the compassion of God flows in, and evangelical repentance flows out, attended with self-loathing, and with wonder and admiration at the long-suffering mercy, and astonishing condescension, of God: and this is called God's granting us repentance unto life. O how the soul now loves and adores the Almighty, who engrosses the whole of our affections, and crucifies us to this world. And this is fulfilling his ancient promise: "And the Lord thy God will

circumcise thy heart, that thou mayest love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." Thus we are taught of God, and then led to his dear Son, and transplanted into him, in whom we find righteousness and strength, which constitutes us trees of righteousness, the right-hand planting of God, that he may be glorified. This, my sister, is the good work of God upon the soul. To a lively hope he begets us; and from the piercing sting of death, from under the ministration of death, and from bondage to the fear of death, he brings his own children; for so it is written, "He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death," Psalm lxxviii. 20. From death in the law to life in Christ do they pass by faith; and upon Christ, as upon a nail fastened in a sure place, do all the offspring and issue hang their hopes, their expectations, their hearts, with all their burdens, for time and eternity. Read Isaiah, xxii. 45 24. The next thing is, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." And now what remains? That every branch in Christ his heavenly Father purges, that it may bring forth more fruit. And under this purging operation thou wast when my former Letter found thee. And thus have I pursued thee, and I have overtaken thee. And now, seeing this is God's work and way, humbly submit thyself under his hand, and attend to these things a little more, and visit less; and thou shalt reap the benefit of it Compare thy state with this account, and comfort thyself with these things, for my God will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. My kind love to your spouse. God preserve and bless you both. Amen and amen, says

Thy ready servitor.

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter XXIV.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

I can no longer be silent in acknowledging your last kind favour, and telling you that it came not to me empty. O the goodness of my God to me, such a wretched, unworthy creature! Well might the apostle say, "What manner of love is this that is bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God!" But I must begin and tell you where your Letter found me; though I confess, it will make my Letter appear more like a journal than a Letter. I was contending with the Almighty to his face, and telling him, it was in vain to wait on him, or look to him for that which I was seeking for; and that he knew he had killed me to all but himself, on purpose to aggravate my misery. I likewise called his prophets liars, and said they had prophesied only what they wished might come to pass; but he knew he never put such things in their mouths. Many times did I read your Letters, and God wrought by his Spirit with them, so that I felt my hard heart melt, in some degree, under the power and light that attended the contents to my soul, and contrition and godly sorrow began to operate, and I had a view of the goodness of the Lord to me in keeping me from getting from under his hand, and going where those fled you mentioned. This made my very soul to melt within me. This was the language of my heart, "O Lord, keep me under thy chastening hand as long as thou seest best for me; choose my path for me; help me to put my mouth in the dust, and to bear thy indignation, because I have sinned against thee. Only let me never find any soul-satisfaction in any thing but in the enjoyment of his blessed presence." Thus I was Friday and Saturday. On Sabbath morning I found my mind cloudy and dark. I saw where his excellency was: for, very far from the spot I stood upon, I could not bear the rays

of his countenance; for surely the face of Moses never shone brighter than his did at that time; and never sure was a soul more burnt in the flames of jealousy than I was. I am sure my feelings could never be equalled but by Satan himself. I had been basking in the rays of God's presence, and now cast down to the lowest hell without a gleam of hope. And, besides this, what further added to my jealousy, I saw the dew sweetly distal on two persons who sat near me. I knew they had found him whom my soul loveth. But on Monday morning he did come indeed, and gave me such a view of his love and faithfulness to his word, oath, and covenant, as my pen nor tongue can never describe. Your prediction was indeed fulfilled; for he came down on my soul as the dew on the mown grass, and as the rain that waters the earth. And such a time in prayer did my soul never experience before. He admitted me into his very heart, and his language to me seemed the same as the king's to Esther, "What is thy petition, and what is thy request? and it shall be granted thee, not only to the half, but the whole of my kingdom." But I found I wanted another enlargement, that I might ask enough; for I saw there was no straightness in God. And the Lord knows what I did ask at this time, for I know not. But, whatever it was, I shall know hereafter; for nothing can be impossible to this faith. However, in a few hours I found my mind clouded again, and Satan was permitted to assault and suggest to my mind that it was not real, and that I was catching at something I could not hold fast. But these words settled and decided the matter, "It is the voice of my Beloved: behold he cometh leaping on the mountains, and skipping on the hills." And a sweet peace I found in my soul. However, before the day was past, I felt my mind again beclouded, and my soul disturbed, and Satan suggesting that it was not real; but the above words were attended again, the second time, with power, and kept vibrating through my very soul, for, I believe, two hours; and the matter was made clear to me that I was not deceived. On Tuesday morning the Lord met me again in prayer; and I

bless his name, he renewed the same over again, as he did the morning before; and sweetly did he commune with my soul; and he has brought me to sit at his feet, clothed, and in my right mind, and has told me, that he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; and that he will lead me into the mysteries of it, for the half has not been told me; and never before did I feel such contrition and godly sorrow. It has killed me outright, and, as you say in one of your Letters, bleeds my very soul to death. O how much do I need your prayers, that I may be kept near him, that I may not be carried away! for Satan will use all his efforts to get me again into his sieve. I have communicated this to no soul living but yourself, thanking you for all favours. I know you are wise as an angel of God; therefore, if you see any thing in this Letter that is not produced under the influence of the Spirit of God, fail not to communicate it to me as soon as you can; for I have reason to be afraid of all my joys. If it should be proved they be false, please to keep the contents of this secret; for, if they know I am up again, they will be trying to make me the keeper of their vineyards, which, perhaps, would be attended with a neglect of my own. Indeed, at present, I want no conversation with any body; I am so afraid of losing what I have got. Adieu.

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter XXV.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

I HAVE been expecting a Letter from you every day for this month past, and have felt much at your long silence. Satan has endeavoured to help the matter forward, and has suggested to me what, perhaps, never entered your head. But he is not worth spending any time about; so I will not say any more about him, but proceed to tell my dear friend that, since I wrote you last, I have experienced a sweet gale from the south wind, which, for a time, carried all that was not mortal within the tell, and left me nothing but the poor frail tabernacle here below, and even that felt the effects of it so much that it was hardly able to sustain it. Indeed, my dear brother, I hardly knew, for some time, whether in the body, or out of the body; and, had it been the will of my God, glad should I have been to have taken my eternal flight, and left mortality behind. But I am fully persuaded that it is not to take place yet; because it is given me to believe that it is appointed for me to bear no small part of the burden and heat of the day; and I am to stand in many of the Lord's battles. But, however weak I am, he will teach my hands to war, and my fingers to fight; and I trust that no weapon that is formed against me shall prosper; because I know all my enemies are his enemies. I had, three nights ago, a very particular dream, which I well know came from God, and will, I have no doubt, have its accomplishment; and, as you are one of the parties concerned, I will make bold to trouble you with the relation of it. I dreamed I was standing in an open road; you came up to me, and conversed with me for about a quarter of an hour, when you turned from me and went out of my sight. You was no sooner gone, than there came up to me a middle aged woman, very comely in her appearance. She had on a long white robe; she had a soft,

smooth, smiling countenance; and very pleasant did she look at me; but I saw the very devil under that robe. I trembled at her appearance till my very joints shook; for I perceived she had very evil designs against me. She minutely surveyed me from head to foot. I therefore took my garments and girded them round me as tight as possibly I could, and stood trembling before her, as I thought her intention was to rob me. I had not stood long before you came to me the second time; which, when she saw, she turned, and went out of my sight. You conversed with me as before, though I do not recollect any thing of the conversation. I secretly wished you not to leave me, as I knew the flatterer was at no great distance; but I did not ask you. You turned and went out of my sight again; and no sooner was you gone, but this woman came lip to me again, but somewhat nearer. I felt the same sensations as before, and, as before, took my garments, and girt them round me with all the strength I had, and stood trembling before her, expecting her to fall on me. I wished for you to come again: but you came no more. This was done three times; and, I believe, in my trembling I awoke. What it all means I must leave to God and future discovery; but sure I am, by the repetitions of the dream, and by my strange feelings under it, that some sore trial awaits me. I know that the church of Rome, and all false churches, as well as the foolish virgins, are called women, and are set forth as very gaudy and gay in their dress, as this woman was; and I believe it is the business and delight of such persons to rob the children of God. But who can take away the garment of imputed righteousness, or lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? My garment I wrapped close round me; and I believe it is faith that puts this robe on, and keeps it close. However, suffer we must; and, "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him;" for our consolations are as sure as our sufferings. The Lord promises strength equal to the day; and, if so, I shall stand and withstand. My other three succeeding epistles you told me, drew some secrets from your heart; and, I am sure, they did

my soul good; and, as this is the third since you wrote me, I hope these will do the same again. I saw the herald last night, and he was as well as usual. Hope this will meet you and your family well. Believe me to remain

Your affectionate friend and sister in the Lord Jesus Christ,

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter XXVI.

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

Having a little leisure time upon my hands, I am inclined to write to thee, having a desire to know how thou dost. But which way to steer my course, so as to find thee, is the difficult task that I have undertaken. In my former epistles I always went before thee by the spirit of prophecy; and, as thou camest after, thou didst set to thy seal that the word of the Lord was true. But, moving from my old habitation, and the troubles which have attended it, have so interrupted our correspondence, that I know not where thou art. However, I will pursue the footsteps of the flock; and I have no doubt but I shall overtake thee, either in the valleys, or in the heights of Israel.

To go back to the days of thy dispersion, when thou wast stumbling upon the dark mountains, must be altogether vain. The Shepherd's promise to thee in that state hath been fulfilled: "I will seek my sheep, and search them out; and I will gather them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark days." Frown these dismal and dark regions he hath put thee forth, and gone before thee, and caused thee to pass under the rod, and to hear his voice; and he hath led thee into the bond of the covenant, that thou mightest be bound up in the bundle of life with the chief Shepherd. This is the summit of all happiness, the height of Zion's dignity, the high mountain and the eminent on which so many have said, "I shall never be moved, thou, Lord, of thy goodness, hast made my hill so strong." Upon this eminence he carries the lambs in his bosom, as well as leads gently those that are with young. The former feel the warmth of his heart, the latter the strength of his arm. But it is vexatious, grievous, yea, and dangerous, coming down from

this mount; because the horrible pit and the miry clay are so near to the foot of it, one of old tumbled into it: "I stick fast; I am come into the deep waters, so that the floods overflow me." This stiffened his joints, and relaxed his nerves, and made him stagger and waddle in his walk. "I am ready to halt, and my sorrows are continually before me." This being put out of the bosom, and driven from the suckling-house, and turned adrift to go behind, and only now and then allowed to hear the Shepherd's voice, and being bid to follow him instead of riding in the bosom, appears to be hard treatment. However, he always heals them that halt, hinds up that which is broken, and feeds that which is faint; "the Lord is my shepherd, therefore I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Thus to lie down and find rest and satisfaction, encompassed and supported by the lively oracles, or life-giving words of promise, and to be led by the streams which flow from the river of divine pleasure, makes us fat and flourishing. But, alas! these vanish again, and we lose sight of these waters: "I am a stranger with thee; hide not thy commandment from me. O, when wilt thou come and comfort me!" Here the old man, and the sheep's worst enemy, entangle him; he is hung up: "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. The troubles of my heart are enlarged; O bring thou me out of my distresses!" Out he comes again: "I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities, and hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy. Thou hast set my feet in a large room." But he soon wanders out of this into the desert, and gets upon the barren mountains of Sinai, and here gets both blinded and impoverished: "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments." What part of this path of tribulation my sister is now on, or which of these footsteps of the flock suits her present steps, I know not; but,

when I saw her last, she was shut up and could not come forth; and, when I informed her of a future enlargement, her answer agreed with that of her sister of old, "Nay thou man of God, do not lie to thine handmaid;" for I shall never be comfortable any more in this world. Has experience, from that time to this, proved that saying to be true? or did the Lord confirm the word of his servant, and perform the council of his messenger?

Once more: Hast thou found, in the course of thy pilgrimage, any thing to confirm that common saying of many, namely, that those who, by the Spirit, are brought once into liberty, are never exercised with, nor entangled in, legal bondage again? or whether this bondage be not one ingredient in the cup of Zion's sorrow, which all must drink of, more or less, who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth? A solution of these matters will lay me under an obligation, which shall be acknowledged with that thankfulness which I hope will ever abound in

Your affectionate friend and brother.

From the Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter XXVII.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

I RECEIVED your kind Letter, and am obliged to you for your kind inquiry after my spiritual welfare. Your Letter found me in the footsteps of the flock; though I must tell you it did not find me on the heights of Zion. I am got on the barren mountains of Sinai; and my soul is as the mountains of Gilboa, without either dew or rain: therefore these words of David suit me, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant:" for I can say also, with him, that I do not forget God's commandments. Since I wrote to you last, which is now more than four months, I have been led in a strange path. If you recollect, I wrote to you just before the Lord had granted me that second enlargement from the bondage in which I had lain for five months. This was a sweet revival of the work. But, alas! gradually did those sweet sensations on my soul wither, and down from the mount I came before I was aware; and for two months I had not the least light on the path I was in; only I knew what I had lost. Nor could I get any help from the sanctuary, nor strength out of Zion; and, for want of light I could not describe my strange feelings to any one; yet I was not in deep distress all this time, though I knew I was not comfortable. However, I was sure it was a path I had not been in before. But, about a month ago, under one of the orations of his Majesty's herald, the Lord 1138 was pleased to shine with a ray of light while he was describing a speech of my great great grandmother's, recorded in the annals of antiquity; where she says, "I sleep, but my heart waketh." In a moment I was given to see that I was in the same case, and her prayer was that moment mine; and from my heart I could say, "awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." Ever since the

Lord brought me into the liberty of the gospel, these words have perplexed me, why the venerable spouse should wish to awake the north wind. But I believe I know the secret now; for I had rather be under the influence of that gale than to lie wind bound, which is my case at present. But, upon this discovery of my state, my beloved seemed to put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. This seemed, in a measure, to rouse me from my spiritual lethargy, and a little fervour was communicated to my spirit, which enabled me to arise and open to my beloved. But, as it fared with her of old, so it does with me; for my beloved has withdrawn himself, and is gone; I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer; and, since that time, I bare lost that little fervour I then found on my spirit, so that I have no heart to seek him. But the light which discovers where I am remains still with me. This is my present state; and how long I am to lie at anchor I know not; but I do not, at present, feel the least breeze from the everlasting hills to fill the sails. I feel this a sad case indeed, and can find no access to God; no faith in exercise to plead his word of promise at a throne of grace. Therefore, if you see my beloved, tell him that I am sick of love.

The questions you ask a solution of are not I am sure for your own information; but, whatever your motive may be, I am bound, from a grateful sense of my obligations to you, to answer any question you shall ask, if it lies in my power: and I hope I shall ever bear my testimony against such a lie as that viz. that the believer, after being once brought into the liberty of the gospel, is never entangled again in legal bondage; my own experience is point-blank against it. Therefore I know that those who assert such things know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. For I am sure this is the third time that I have been in legal bondage since the Lord was pleased to proclaim liberty to my soul, which is but two years come next week; and I think my wanderings have been something similar

to those of the prophet Elijah, when he went a day's journey in the wilderness. I have always been made to experience the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, before I have been favoured with the still small voice which has brought me back again; and have been made as bitter in my spirit as was the prophet, when he sat under the juniper tree, and requested of the Lord that he might die, though he knew it was contrary to God's will. Moreover, I am in a strait to know what this can be. I know it is the effect of legal bondage; and I have felt it as keen and as galling since my deliverance as I did before, only with this difference, as you observed to me in a former Letter, "that unappeased wrath, and unatoned guilt, are not mixed with it." But I must conclude with thanking you kindly for all favours, and begging a continuance of them, attended with an interest in your prayers for me, that I may be kept from every snare that Satan may spread for my feet, and that the Lord would condescend to visit me again, and restore to me the joys of his salvation, and uphold me with his free Spirit, that the wilderness and the solitary place may be made glad and flourish, and the desert blossom as the rose. Then joy and gladness will be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody, and not till then. My partner joins in kind respects. Believe me to remain, as much as ever,

Your affectionate friend and sister in the Lord Jesus,

The King's Dale.

Philomela.

Letter XXVIII.

To Philomela, of the King's Dale

I HAVE paid several visits this week, both to you on the mil and to those in the valley, only I was absent in body; so that my appearance was imperceptible; somewhat like that of the beloved standing behind the wall, and shewing himself through the lattice. Whether any troubles have happened to either of your families, I know not; but you have been much on my mind when I have been secretly engaged in that greatest, best, most blessed, and most glorious privilege that ever perishing sinners were favoured with.

Private prayer is my court visits to my God, the life and breath of my soul; it is the ascension of the soul to the Almighty, and its returns are the descension of Christ to the soul's help. It is the assuasion of grief, the easement of a burdened heart, and the vent of a joyful one. It is the rich savour of mystical incense, the overflowings of a living fountain, an all-prevailing sacrifice, the delight of the Almighty, and a ravishing charm to the heavenly bridegroom.

Prayer has made the Sun of Righteousness to stand still in his firmament, though discharged from the lips of a blind beggar. It has brought the Ancient of Days to dwell in a bush; and even a worm, by this simple mean, has held the King of kings in the galleries; yea, Omnipotence itself has been constrained to say, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." But dust and ashes replied, "I will not, except thou bless me." And he blessed him there, and allowed that himself had been conquered, and styled his antagonist a prevailer with God. Thus Judah's Lion was overcome, and the lame duck waddled off with the victory.

Prayer is a defence against the spirit of this world, and a guard against the inroads of vanity; it is a maul upon the head of the old man, and a lash of scorpions for the devil.

Prayer is a bridle in the jaws of a persecutor, a spell to a voracious enemy, a dagger at the heart of a heretic, a key to parables and dark sayings, and a battering-ram on the walls of salvation. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

Prayer opens the bountiful hand of God, opens the door of mercy, keeps Christ in the throne of our affections, and covers every rival and usurper with, shame and confusion of face.

Prayer is my royal-exchange, where I have brought thousands of cares, burdens, snares, troubles, vexations, temptations, doubts, fears, misgivings of heart, sorrows of mind, fainting fits, unbelieving fits, fits of love-sickness, fits of carnal and spiritual jealousy, hardness of heart, rebellion of heart, and ingratitude of heart; together with every other disorder, as the leprosy, the evil of the heart, the plague of the heart, and the plague of the head; together with deaf ears, blind eyes, feeble knees, languid hands, baiting feet, and a stiff neck; with many oppositions, persecutions, false charges, slanderous accusations, and vile reproaches; and have, by this simple mean, got rid of them all at times. I have gone to this change with all sorts of devils, as an unclean devil, a false preaching devil, a blasphemous devil, a reforming devil, a furious devil, a fawning devil, and a sleepy devil, and have left them in the hands of him that could manage them, when my strength has been all gone, and self-despair has seized me. All these, and thousands more, have I taken to tiffs royal-exchange; and you know that one of the names of a believer is that of an exchanger, Matt. xxv. 27; and I have received in return thousands of kisses, blessings, mercies, and deliverances; many refreshings, renewings, revivals, restorations, and

returns of comfort, peace, love, and joy; together with fresh discoveries, love tokens, wholesome truths, profound mysteries, glorious glimpses, bright prospects, terrestrial views, undoubted evidences, infallible proofs, heavenly lessons, confirming visits, conspicuous deliverances, earnest, pledges, and foretastes, reviving cordials, precious promises, or bank notes, payable this day, and every day through life, and even to millions of ages after date, signed, sealed, and delivered, by Jehovah himself: and God knows, and conscience too, that I lie not.

Prayer has scattered many confederate enemies of my soul, marred the schemes of Jacobins, frustrated the tokens of liars, and made diviners mad. It counteracts the designs of Satan and his dear children; it hath made me the enemy of the world, the rival of impostors, the envy of hypocrites, an eye-sore to the devil, an admiration to perishing sinners, a spectacle to the world, and a wonder to myself. "He that prays to his Father, that seeth in secret, shall be rewarded openly." By prayer the poor come up from the dust, and the beggar from the dunghill, and get a seat among the princes of God's people, and an inheritance in the throne of glory. Mental prayer hath brought me from sleeping in a barn to a comfortable lodging, from a lodging to a cottage, from a cottage to a house, and from a house to a little farm: it hath brought food for my need, apparel for my use, furniture for my dwelling, fuel to my hearth, money to my pocket, and faithful friends to my heart, and hath kept my pot boiling almost thirty years. For all these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel, that I may do these things for them, Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

Prayer brought me from the coal-barge to a pulpit, from being a servant of servants to be a ruler in the Lord's household; it delivered my hands from the shovel and my shoulders from the sacks.

Yea, earnest desires hath raised four houses of prayer for God, and brought the presence of God into the houses; it hath brought living waters to my well, oil to my cruse, joy to my heart, and a blessing to many souls. And what shall I say more? Why, prayer hath brought little animals to my fields, living creatures to my yard, a horse for my use, when the King's business requires haste, and a vehicle at my command in inclement weather. This has caused the very abjects to gather together about me, and the eyes of the envious to look on me, who have seen it, and grieved, grudged, and gnashed, and wandered up and down, and gone round the walls of my dwelling grinning like a dog. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Prayer hath brought the souls of some, when departed, back into their bodies again. It engages the Almighty on the side of the suppliant, and establishes an alliance with God. It hath stopped the bottles of heaven for three years and six months, and opened them again at the expiration of that term; yea, and brought a miraculous plenty into the house of a poor widow, while destruction and famine were riding all around in universal triumph. "All things are possible to him that believeth;" "And whatsoever ye ask in prayer, I believing, ye shall receive."

Prayer hath brought health to the sick, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, eyes to the blind, life to the dead, salvation to the lost; and even driven the devil himself from the heart of many, and brought the God of heaven to dwell in his room.

Prayer is pouring out the soul before God, and shewing him our troubles; it is casting our cares upon him that careth for us, and our burdens upon him in whom we are to say we have righteousness and strength; it is opening to our well-beloved, opening our minds, our hearts, and our mouths to him who

tells us to let him hear our voice, and see our faces, the one being sweet, and the other comely. This is besieging an everlasting kingdom, moving the throne of grace, and coming with a treble rat-tat at the door of mercy. In prayer we must take no denial, if we have but a feeling sense of our wants, a scriptural warrant to go upon, or one promise to plead; we must sue, argue, reason, plead, supplicate, intercede, confess, acknowledge, thank, bless, praise, adore, repeat, importune, observe, take hold of, and turn every thing that we can to our own advantage, so as we can but get something for the soul. Sensible sinners, that are poor and needy, have gotten many invitations, encouragements, precedents, promises, the covenant, the oath of God, the merits of Christ, and all his covenant engagements, undertakings, and performances; the covenant characters that he sustains, his incarnation, and near relationship to us; together with all the glorious train of divine perfections found in the proclamation of the name of God to Moses; for they all harmonize and shine in Christ crucified. Thus far I had written in this second epistle, my dear sister, when your last Letter came to hand. I see where you are, and will endeavour to point it out to you.

And now observe: when God the Father is about to bring us, as his chosen children, to his dearly beloved Son, that we may be openly and experimentally espoused to him, he comes near to us in a broken law, as it is written, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord," and teachest him out of thy law, that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, till the pit be digged up for the wicked." This rest from the days of adversity is to be found only in Christ Jesus. He is our rest and our refreshing; and this rest Christ promises to them that are weary and heavy laden. This lading is sin, guilt, and wrath; and this labouring, and being weary of it, is our fruitless toil under the legal yoke; for the law works wrath and death in us, and this is truly hard labour; and, as we have no success in it, we faint, and get weary of it. This, my sister,

is our heavenly Father's teaching; and so saith the Saviour," It is written, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me; and he that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." When Christ espouseth us, he doth five things for us; but, antecedent to this, God, by the application of the law, makes us feel our need of them all. When the law comes home the first thing that it does is to discover our filthiness. "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" and sin by the law becomes exceeding sinful.

Secondly, The curse of the law, and the wrath of God, pierce through the poor breastplate of all self-righteousness, which convinces us that we are unrighteous in the sight of God.

Thirdly, It discovers and stirs up our carnal enmity. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."

Fourthly, The law fills us with fear and torment, and leaves us in bondage to it. And,

Fifthly, It discovers our blindness and our ignorance, and makes the old veil that is upon our hearts a darkness that may be felt. Such a soul and no other, is a fit object for Christ to embrace; and under these circumstances, God leads us to him, as he did Eve to the first Adam; and Christ receives us, at his hand, as his gift.

The first thing that Christ does for us is to cleanse us from our filth, which the law has discovered to us: "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you."

The second thing is to bring forth the best robe, and put it upon us, this is the wedding-garment: "The Lord," says Zion, "hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom

decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Now the filthy garments of self-righteousness, discovered by the law, are put off, and this change of raiment is put on.

Thirdly, The ring of everlasting love is brought forth to adorn the hand. This ring of divine love subdues the carnal enmity discovered and stirred up by the law.

Fourthly, The next thing is, the shoes are brought forth for the feet; which shoes are peace with God through Christ, and peace with our own conscience through the application of the atonement: "Having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." These shoes much charm the heavenly wooer: "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O princess daughter!"

The fifth thing is, the Sun of Righteousness now shines upon us with healing in his beams. He views us with approbation, complacency, and delight. This is the saving manifestation of himself to us, and to all that the Father hath given him. This removes the old veil from the heart, which hung so heavy upon us under the law: the face being turned to the Lord, and we emboldened and encouraged to look up, the veil is taken away. All this work is done, in a greater or less degree, on the day of our espousals, and on the day of the gladness of the bridegroom's heart. And now let me shew thee the hand that faith, as an instrument, hath in all this.

First, Christ is the fountain open that cleanses from all sin, and faith applies the atonement: God purifies our hearts by faith.

Secondly, The Lord Jesus is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; and faith lays hold of his righteousness, and puts it on. Hence it is said, that the righteousness of Christ is to all and upon all that believe.

Thirdly, Now, as faith has the honour of being the hand of the soul, which hand appropriates all these things to us; so faith, as the hand of the soul, is honoured with wearing this ring, which is the eternal love of God: "Faith worketh by love." And, as a wedding-ring is an emblem of love, and, when put on the proper finger, is a sure token from a husband to a woman of her wedlock with him; so the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit of God is a sure token of our espousals to Christ, and of eternal union with him, and of God the Father's love to us in him. And, as there is, at times, in an affectionate young woman wooed, doubts and fears whether her intended will prove faithful at last or not, which will not be removed until she is espoused with a ring; so here the match will not appear clear to the soul; nor will doubts, fears, misgivings of heart, and torment, be cast out, till perfect love takes place, or until we are made perfect in love, or until this ring be put on the hand of faith; the greatest, the hardest, and most difficult work of faith being this, to persuade the soul that Christ loves it with an everlasting love; and even faith's persuasion must be attended with a feeling sense of this love too, or else the soul cannot rest satisfied. But, when this is done, the match is made, and is indissoluble, and the soul is more than sure of it. And now,

Fourthly, Faith puts on the shoes. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts."

Fifthly, Faith now looks through the veil, and sees him that is invisible; yea she sees the promised seed, and embraces him. And it is this eye that captures the heart of the heavenly wooer: "Thou hast ravished my heart my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes." This, my beloved sister, is our espousals to the Lord Jesus; thus comes the second Eve to the second Adam. But still the Father doth not let his daughter go out of his hand; no, "None," saith the

bridegroom, "shall pluck them out of my hand;" and adds, "My Father is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." Thus God holds her, and claims her as his daughter, and Christ holds her, and claims her as his spouse, and as his Father's choice and gift to him. And, indeed, it was our heavenly Father that decreed, proposed, and made this match. Thus have I shewed thee how we become dead to the law that we may be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that we may bring forth fruit unto God, even as the branch in the vine brings forth grapes.

But now observe what the Saviour says: "I am the vine, and ye are the branches, and my Father is the husbandman; every branch in me that beareth fruit my Father purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." After we have enjoyed the dearly be loved of our souls for a few months, our love, our simplicity, meekness, contrition, tenderness, filial fear, &c. abate in their exercise; and we begin to creep into self, wax proud, get secure and careless; dream of ease all the way, and are very nice, and rather dainty; nothing but the best wine of the kingdom, and the very marrow of the feast, will do for us; we must shew ourselves, seek admiration and applause, and appear to be something. But, when the Father sees this he takes us in hand again; he visits our sins with the rod, and our iniquities with scourges, as he says he will do; he turns us loose on the barren mountains of Sinai, he exercises us with legal bondage again. This stirs up every inbred corruption, which astonishes us; this convinces us of the need of diligence and watchfulness, and that we have not much to be proud of, seeing the root of every sin is still in us, though guilt is purged and sin is subdued by grace. And here our beloved withdraws himself, and is gone. He is not to be found at Horeb, but at Zion. From this mount we get nothing but barrenness, dryness, and deadness of soul. These things falling upon us, bring us to rue our pride, security, lightness,

and folly; and, though we come no more under the curse, nor under vindictive wrath nor unpardoned guilt, yet it is a grievous yoke to an heaven-born soul, and not a little mortifying to one of the spouse's dignity. Bitter reflections, cruel jealousies, and humbling mortifications, attend this purging rod. And it is very debasing to appear with the yoke of a slave, and a fallen countenance, like a thief, before the meek and lowly soul; as it is written, "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women ! My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices." He was gone down to them that were more meek and lowly. But when we are humbled the Father leads us back again to the enjoyment of Christ Jesus, who is God's salvation to the ends of the earth; and we are again influenced by a spirit of love, of power, and of a sound mind; and now we are all tenderness, care, and circumspection, simplicity, meekness, and gratitude. But, alas! this soon wears off again, and then another purging comes upon the fruitful branch; and, after that is over, sweet union is felt again, and we feel our abiding in him; and do, by these means, bring forth fruit: and thus we go in and out, and find pasture. This, my dear sister, is the purging hand that thou art now under. Thou art, for the third time, under the all-wise management of the great husbandman; and he is puzzling and confounding thy wisdom, and taking off some of thy luxurious branches, and casting down some of thy high reasonings and contentions, which exalt themselves against the knowledge of him. And now for the spouse's request in the Song. Know thou that, when God shook the house where the apostles were assembled, together with the rushing of a mighty wind, and filled them all with the holy Comforter, under whose influence they went forth and wrought, and the Lord worked by them, confirming their word with signs, that then was fulfilled this prophecy, "And the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south," Zech. ix. 14. Thus is the spirit of love called the south wind; wind being a known emblem of the Holy Ghost. Read Isaiah, chap. xl.

Whereas the wrath of God in the law, which stirs up our enmity, is the spirit of bondage to fear; and, as it brings a cold chill on our love, and much fear and trembling, it is therefore called the north wind. Hence Solomon, knowing that bondage always precedes liberty, the one bringing grief and the other joy, says, "In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider; for God hath set the one against the other." Prosperity is the time when our Lord embraces us; out our adversity is the time when the Lord refrains from embracing. Hence Solomon represents the spouse as being dissatisfied with her carnal ease, and dead, indifferent state; and that, to such a hungry soul, the bitterness of legal bondage would be sweeter than such a dead frame. He sets forth the spouse as praying thus: "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out;" knowing that there would be no divine embraces till humbling trials had taken place. In this way is the believer purged. Take notice further, that, as some souls are called servants, and are under the law in bondage to it, and strangers to grace; so gracious souls, though often humbled, and exercised with the bondage of the law, are still under grace: the former being a corrupt tree in its natural state, and the other a good tree, purged, and made good by the grace of God. Solomon represents death as a woodcutter, cutting both down, and both falling under their own proper influence; or as bending under that wind that blows upon them; "Whether the tree falls toward the north, or toward the south, in the place where the tree falleth there it shall be." No change shall be made in the soul after death. The former dies in self and self-righteousness, looking to the law; the latter dies in faith, looking to Jesus: and so shall each appear in the great day. Let my sister, therefore, kiss the chastening rod, and consider that she procures it to herself, and God appoints it for her good, and it is intended to make the spouse fruitful. But not so the servant, who is in a false profession; who without being dead to the law, or divorced from it, yet claims

Christ the second husband before the first be dead. These are otherwise dealt with; and so it follows: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away;" as he did Judas. And to such, and only such, in the most dreadful sense, is that awful text applicable, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;" as every fruitless branch doth, which God the Father takes away from Christ, and from his church. These soon wither, and soon burn. If any thing in this scrawl is encouraging, comforting, or establishing, receive it as one espoused to the Lamb of God; for, "All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or Christ, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;" and, among the rest, in the indissoluble bond of the everlasting covenant, I subscribe myself, in the Covenant Head, and for his sake,

Devotedly yours,

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter XXIX.

To Noctua Aurita, of the Desert.

I HAVE received safe your very valuable epistle, and I thank you kindly for the same. I was somewhat surprised at you? writing a Letter to me on that subject at that time. I will give you a little account how it has been with me since I wrote to you last.

The day after I wrote you the Letter, which you know informed you that I was lying at anchor, wind-bound, an unexpected breeze sprung up. I did expect the south wind, but, alas! it was the north wind; and I have been for a fortnight tossed with no small tempest; insomuch that, at times, I have despaired even of life, and my mouth hath uttered perverse things before God. Such rebellion have I found working within, such contending with the Almighty, such unbelief prevailing, together with such deadness and barrenness, and such bitterness of spirit, that I think I never felt before. I am kept at such a distance from God, shut quite up in prayer, and not a word to plead before him, which made me cry out, "Ail these things are against me." I could get nothing under the word; and therefore I have come away from the house of God raging like a rebel; and have found true what you mentioned in your "Child of Liberty in legal Bondage," that, was it not for the strong hand of God on such souls, the ways of Zion would be unoccupied by them. I am sure this is true; for my feelings at that time were quite the reverse of David's when he said, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord. When shall I come and appear before God?" But not this, but the former, was the state of my mind when I received your Letter; and, when I read what you wrote on the subject of prayer, it caused desperation, in some measure, to work within me.

Well, thought I, if this is the way that these enemies are to be overcome, what is to become of me? Pray I cannot; therefore, for aught I see, I must have their company. I had said, when I lay wind-bound, that I had rather be in the storm than lie so. And a storm it has been to me, with a witness. Having thus given you the dark side, I will proceed to inform you how the tempest was made to cease.

On Monday evening last I went to Bethel in all this storm. His excellency's oration was, "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer." This set me a quarrelling with him. Well, thought I, there will be nothing for me this night; I shall go home worse than I came out, as I did last night. I think, had he picked the sacred records throughout, he could not have found a subject that is more contrary to my present feelings. But no sooner did he begin to open than the contents distilled as the dew. The devil fled, unbelief got a blow, carnal reason was so put to the blush as to be forced to retire; nor have they dared to shew their rebellious heads since.

On Tuesday morning, on taking up the records of Zion, my eyes were directed to the following proverb: "The ear that heareth the reproof of life shall abide among the wise." I cannot express what a sweet light accompanied these words, which gave me to see what I had received the evening before. My mind was carried above the literal sense of the words. I understood what the ear there spoken of is, even the ear of the soul; the same that Christ himself spoke of when he said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." This ear was given me; and what the Lord caused me to hear was, the reproof of life; because it was attended with a quickening influence to my soul. And that it was the voice of God, by his word and his Spirit, I have not a single doubt; because, on those three evenings, the devil, unbelief, and carnal reason, were forced to make their retreat, whose plea before was so powerful in

my heart. And this visit was attended with a sweet persuasion, yea, an assurance, that I shall be found at last among the wise virgins, when the Lord comes with the midnight cry.

I think my sensations are at present somewhat like David's. when he said, "By this I know that thou favourest me, because my enemies do not triumph over me." I believe the Lord will never let me go out of his hands until he hath made me meet for the inheritance. He will put me into a thousand fires, that my dross and tin may be purged from me.

I have no large paper, or I should have wrote you more at this time on some parts of your Letter. I was sorry to hear, by a Letter you wrote to my brother, that you was indisposed. I hope ere now you are about again, which I shall be very glad to hear as soon as convenient. Mr. H_____ joins me in kind love, and thanks you for your Letter. Believe me to remain

Your very affectionate friend and sister in the Lord Jesus,

The King' s Dale.

Philomela.

Letter XXX.

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

THINE epistle comforted my heart. My hope of you is steadfast. Nothing ever raised a doubt in my mind of the goodness of thy state but thy long abode on Mount Tabor; for, when once meekness, contrition, godly sorrow, compunction of heart, self-abasement, and humility, wear off, and dryness and lightness attend our joy, there is danger. Pride and self-seeking creep in; nor is watchfulness and diligence in prayer attended to. The vessel goes on but wants ballast; and, when the rod comes on, we fall many leagues back. But now, blessed be God, we keep pace; we are in one and the same way. "If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him." If we share in the afflictions, so shall we in the consolations. I have had some uncommon seasons of refreshing of late; I mean secret refreshings on my own spirit. His soul-humbling advances towards me dissolved me, and sensibly affected both my body and soul. My hair moved upon my head, and I could feel my blood run in my veins. His presence, his unparalleled condescension, the freedom and the familiarity that he used with me, made my soul soar aloft in the most profound gratitude. I was obliged to stand still, and weep it out, for my mind floated on the river of self-abasing and unspeakable pleasure. The world and all about me seemed reduced to the drop of a bucket, or the small dust of a balance; my eyes poured out before him the tears of undissembled love, and I kept waving my hand, and coyly putting away the effects of his undeserved visit, crying out, "I am not worthy, I am not worthy, I am not worthy, I am not worthy." But, like himself, for he is like no other, he pressed his good-will, and the tokens of his eternal love, upon me, without taking the least notice of my repeated cries of

unworthiness. My soul's unwearied enemy, who seldom leaves me one whole day together, fled, and not a corruption moved, nor a wandering thought sprung up to lead my mind astray. I had three of these unexpected visits; but they were transient, like those of a wayfaring man, who turns aside and tarries but a night. But I knew that they were earnest of more enduring and uninterrupted felicity. Soon after this my implacable enemy returned with double force; not to dispute me out of the reality of what I enjoyed, for I have felt more of that than ever he did, and know the sweetness of it better than he does; nor did he attempt to call in question my interest. He has dropped that for upwards of twenty years; nay, he has acknowledged it, and confessed it, when he hath wanted to tempt me to presumption. But, as all the doubts that his lies have raised in my mind could never move me from the foundation, so all his acknowledgments of the goodness of my state never added to my establishment. He can neither bless us at all, nor curse us at all. The work that he came to do was to stir up hard thoughts, prejudices, and enmity, at the best of friends, because I was then deserted, and my mind suffered to be defiled with a foul-mouthed devil, a rebellious and most blasphemous Jacobin. This word flew into my mind, "But I gave myself unto prayer." I took the hint; and, for three or four days, shut myself up, for the space of four or five hours in a day, to attend upon that very thing. And never, to be sure, did that holy and blessed Spirit, that all prevailing intercessor, that quintessence of all meekness, simplicity, and purity, help my infirmities more. I was amazed at the fortitude, boldness, freedom, fervour, argument, and powerful pleadings, that he equipped and furnished me with. Well might the Ancient of Days say to his apostles, "I will send you a Comforter, which the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." For years have I watched and attended to the secret and wonderful operations and influences of that benign and unchangeable friend of sinners, and have admired his

quick, seasonable, and invariable counsel, cautious, and instructions, and have often called him by all the sweet names of heavenly Dove, sweet One, blessed Comforter, sure and faithful Witness, yea, and every sweet and pathetic name that my heart could indite or my lips utter; and, while I have been heaping them upon his blessed head, he has kept my mind tranquil, and his pleasing operations have wonderfully proclaimed his approbation of my simple encomiums. Soon after this I fell ill, and have been laid by a fortnight, during which time he left me not, but favoured me more than usual; and one night I had the following dream. I dreamed that I was sitting at table with many of my friends. I do not remember any entertainment on the table. My mind was chiefly taken up at looking at my friends; and, among the rest, there sat the Lord Jesus Christ in person; and I knew him immediately; nor did he vanish out of my sight; and I found my mind inclined to put two questions to him. I said to him, "Lord, there are but few in this world that know thee, and there is bread enough in our Father's house, and to spare; and, as there are but few that know thee, and as thou hast but a few to feed, how is it then, that thou givest us so little?" He smiled, but gave me no answer. But I thought that every one at the table were looking at him, waiting for his reply; which convinced me that my open question was the language of all their hearts. As I could not succeed in this question, I put another, and the eyes of all at the table seemed to look at me. I said, "When you begin your work on us, you spare no pains, nor let our souls find rest, until you have weaned us from every thing under heaven; nor will you appear satisfied till you have brought us to love you with all our heart, and with all our soul; and, when you have gained this, what can be the reason of your leaving us, provoking us, and trying us, in so dreadful a manner?" The eyes of all the company, as soon as I had done with my question, were turned from me, and looked at him. But all that I got was another pleasing smile; for my beloved gave me no answer. I cannot, at this time, describe to my dear sister how

dead my soul is to this world, nor how dealt this world is to me. Never did I see so clearly as now the meaning of the former and latter rain, mentioned Hosea, vi. 3; James, v. 7. The former shower, at conversion, I understand, when the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, took place; when righteousness, joy, peace, and praise, sprung up. This purged from guilt and filth, and a wonderful crop of the fruits of the Spirit succeeded. But the latter rain, at death, which is to root up and purge off the very in being of sin, must be a most stupendous work! The work of regeneration, and that of changing our vile bodies, and fashioning them like unto the glorious body of Christ, cannot be greater than this. But this is the thing that he hath spoken to us of; and then there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts. And I must tell thee that, at times, it is much on my mind, according to what I do now and then feel, that the latter rain is not far from me. O then shall the fruit of the earth be excellent and comely, when he that laid the foundation of the earth shall plant the heavens! Isa. li. 16. Then shall there be no more treading down, trouble, nor perplexity, in the valley of vision, Isa. xxii. 5. In this confidence I subscribe myself

Yours to serve in the kingdom and patience of Christ,

In the Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter XXXI.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

I CANNOT express how much I feel myself indebted to you for your soul-strengthening and soul-establishing epistle; for such it is indeed to me; though one part of it caused me sorrow of heart and it will cause the same sorrow to thousands after the Lord takes you from us. But you have borne the burden and heat of the day, and the Lord has appointed the period when you are to rest from your labours. But, O how few labourers there are in the vineyard, though the harvest is truly great! It rejoiced my heart to hear of those sweet visits the Lord has favoured you with. I know something of them, though but in a small measure. I have been favoured with but few of them of late. I seem to be called to sharp conflicts. It gave me great satisfaction to find you acknowledge I am led in the same path with yourself; by which I think you mean the path of tribulation. Indeed, my dear brother, I am led to see more and more that it is the only way to the kingdom. My present standing greatly differs from what it was some time back. I am not led in the expectation of much sensible enjoyment while in this wilderness; though I know that it is only the comfortable presence of the dear Redeemer which makes a heaven upon earth. But the inheritance is not to be enjoyed here, but only the earnest. I think you will not misunderstand me, but I know I am very blundering at conveying my ideas, in this confining I speak too slightly of those visits. But I am sure I was long seeking them as the only food I was to live on. But I see now that the just are to live by faith; and a daily cross is appointed for me. And I think that the Lord shelved me this some time before I was brought to submit to put my shoulders under the burden. But now I am convinced there is no growing in the divine life without trials. Never did I see, as I do now, the

meaning of those words of Hezekiah, when he said, "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit; so wilt thou revive me, and cause me to live." I can see now that the sharpest trials I have been exercised with have proved the greatest blessing to my soul. I thought, when I was on the mount Tabor so many months, I was surely in a place of safety. But, oh, I am well convinced it was a slippery place. Indeed I have not a wish to be placed there again. And, when I have perused the Letters you sent me at that time, I am astonished they did not bring me down. But God had appointed the instrument that was to effect that. I may well say that it is owing to my having obtained help of God that I continue to this moment. I believe I shall never be finally left; he will put me in a thousand fires before he will suffer me to get from under his hand. I must tell you, that the subject of one part of your Letter was entirely new to me, which is the latter rain at death. I thank you kindly for it. I believe the hand of God is in it, as it hath taken, in a great measure, a burden off my mind, which has been a matter of great perplexity, and which I never did communicate to any one; and that is with respect to the temporal death of the body. You cannot conceive the distressing fears I have lived in on account of this thing; how I should be in the pains of death; and fearing the assaults of Satan; and lest I should be, at that time bereft of my senses, and so be left to dishonour God by speaking unadvisedly with my lips. And this has distressed my mind much. But those fears have not in the least abated since the sting of death has been taken away. Satan has, at times, been permitted to suggest to me, in times of desertion, that, if the work was genuine, those fears would not exist in my mind. But I cannot express what a sensible relief I felt when I read that part of your Letter. I hope it will not return again. I know it is very dishonouring to God. If you should find your mind at liberty to enlarge on the subject, I shall take it as a favour; for the subject is much on my mind. I hope the Lord is confirming your bodily health, that you may not' be confined from your

labours. Mr. H___ much wishes he could write to you, but says he is so dead and stupid it is out of his power; but thanks you for your Letters, and shall be always glad to hear from you, begging an interest in your prayers. I remain

Your very affectionate friend and sister in the Lord Jesus,

The King's Dale.

Philomela

Letter XXXII

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

BELOVED sister in the Lord Jesus, and fellow-traveller in the path of tribulation, grace and peace be multiplied. Your kind epistle came safe to hand; and I thank you for your love in the Lord, and the respect you have shewn to me as a poor servant of his. Am at present better in bodily health than I have been for some time past. Every visit from him, every refreshing from his presence, and every time the old tabernacle totters, I am looking out for the greatest work that was ever done on the soul of a sinner. And would you know what it is? take it then. The promise of this great work runs thus: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come to us as the rain, as the latter and former rain upon the earth." Hosea, vi. 1-3. Here is Christ, and we in him; "Come, let us return unto the Lord." This is in the Covenant Head; for he it is that engaged his heart to approach unto God, to appear in his presence for us, Jer. xxx. 21.

"He hath torn, and he will heal us." This is the chastisement of Christ, which procured our peace, and by whose stripes we are healed.

"He hath smitten, and he will bind us up," &c. For our transgressions was he smitten; and to bind up the broken-hearted is the blessed cause of this smiting.

"After two days will he revive us." "Christ died, rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living," Rom. xiv. 9.

"In the third day he will raise us up." "With my dead body shall they arise." "Christ died, according to the scriptures, and was buried; and he rose again the third day according to the scriptures," 1 Cor. xv. 4. I know of no scripture which predicts his resurrection on the third day but this, and Jonah's resurrection from the fish's belly.

"And we shall live in his sight." "He hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 6.

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

"His going forth is prepared as the morning." He is the bright and morning star which first dawns upon us; the day-spring from on high that visits us; and the sun of righteousness which warms us, and conveys healing to us.

"And he shall come unto us as the rain; as the latter and former rain upon the earth." At conversion he comes down, by his Spirit, as showers upon the mown grass, and as rain that waters the earth. This is saving us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing us by the Holy Ghost. And a wondrous work this is, when all the guilt and filth which we have contracted is done away, and not so much as a spot or stain appears; and a which time such a glorious crop, called the first-fruits of the Spirit (I mean faith, hope, love, joy, peace, praise, life, and righteousness), spring up together, and send forth their sweet fragrance. When the beloved comes into his

garden, and eats his pleasant fruits, this work is a most glorious work. But, as sure as the glory of the latter temple exceeded the glory of the former, so sure shall the latter rain produce a more glorious crop than the former; for what wretched roots, that bear hemlock, gall, and wormwood, still remain in the new-born soul! and what access the old fountain of all evil, subtilty, and mischief, hath to his old allies in every believing heart! Who but one could ever say, "When the prince of this world cometh, he hath nothing in me?" Who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Canaanites and hornets are both in God's husbandry, though we are sojourners and dwellers with him. But the righteous have bands in their death; and these are the last fetters that shall ever gall a prisoner of hope; for love is strong as death. And, when charity, which never fails, shall do her last good office in this world, the latter rain comes down, and with its irresistible power beats down and beats out every root and fibre of the old man, and purges out for ever every scarlet and crimson stain of sin, and leaves not so much behind as even the memory of it, then shall faith rise in sight, hope in full enjoyment, and love in her sevenfold heat. And then, but never till then, shall be brought to pass this saying, "And in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts," Zech. xiv. 21. To attain to this, we have apprehended Christ, or rather are apprehended of him. This is that which concerns us, and God will perfect it; for he will not leave us until he hath done the thing that he hath spoken to us of: "To your old age I am he; I will bear, I will carry, and will deliver you." But we must be patient for this coming of the Lord. The husbandman waits till he receives the early and latter rain. Thus far, my dear sister, I have enlarged on this subject according to your request.

The daily cross is intended to counteract the devices of Satan, the workings of the old man, and the pleasing desires of the flesh. But, for my part, this is not all that I expect in the course

of my pilgrimage. No; I expect some familiar visits, fresh love-tokens, and confirming renewals, and promised revivals, of the good work, even to the end of my race; for so it is written, he shall confirm you unto the end, 1 Cor. i. 8.

There is a fault, which originates in our ignorance, and common to all young believers; and that is, limiting the Holy One of Israel, or confining or restraining the Holy Spirit of God to one operation, and that is, his influence of love in cherishing and comforting the soul. While these consolations last, the poor believer thinks all is right, and that the Spirit, as the promised comforter, is upon him, and that he is born again, that his interest is clear, and his state is good; but, when these subside, all is suspected and called into question, and the worst conclusions are often drawn; and some, as far as they could, have cast away their confidence, and given all up for lost. And in this way Israel of old, and we as well as they have often dishonoured, yea, rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit, Isa. lxiii. 10. Now let my dear sister observe and consider the following remarks. We are told that "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This speaking as they were moved doth not signify that they spake what they saw, for they spake many things which they never saw: "Many prophets have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them," Matt. xiii. 16, 17. Speaking as they were moved means, that they spake under the impulse and impression which they felt: "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," Gen. i. 2; and "The Spirit of God moved Samson in the camp of Dan," Judges, xiii. 25. And we know that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy; that, as there were diversities of motions by the Spirit upon the prophets under the Old Testament, so there are diversities of operations upon the souls of believers under the New; not only diversities of gifts by the Spirit, but of influences. So it follows, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;

and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities operations, but it is the same God which worketh in all," I Cor. xii. 4-6. The prophet Jeremiah was to take the wine cup of God's fury at God's hand, and to cause all nations to drink it. The Spirit moved him with the just indignation of God. His was truly the burden of the word of the Lord; for most of his prophecies contained heavy judgments. Under this motion of the Spirit the imprecations on the wicked, which so often occur in the Psalms, were penned.

Elijah was moved with the jealousy of God against Idolatry, and with power to oppose it, and with a flaming zeal for God's honour. Hence we read so much of the spirit and power of Elias, and of his zeal for the Lord God of Hosts.

Sometimes the Spirit moved him with the influences of divine wrath. Under this motion the prophet Elisha cursed the forty and two children which were devoured by bears; and under the same influence Gehazi went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

Sometimes they were moved with the pity and compassion of the Lord. Under these motions the kind invitations, encouragements, and those pathetic commiserations, so often to be met with in the Psalms, were written.

Sometimes they were moved with the eternal love of God, a sense of his presence, and comfortable communion and fellowship with him. And under this influence Solomon wrote his love song upon Christ and his church.

Influenced with the bowels of God's mercy, the prophet Isaiah set forth and painted the dolorous sufferings of Christ. Moved with the faithfulness and immutability, the prophets have advanced and enforced the firmness of God's decrees, the stability of his covenant, and the certainty of the eternal

salvation of all the elect of God. Thus it appears plain that there were diversities of motions by the Spirit of God upon the prophets; and there are also diversities of operations upon all believers. Every grace is of the Holy Spirit's planting; and he is the life of every grace: and the exercise of every grace depends upon his operation. If this wind blow not, the spices flow not out. Sometimes the Spirit operates wonderfully in strengthening and supporting the believer, by his might in the inward man. "My heart and my flesh fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my Portion for ever." "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul," Psalm exxxviii. 3. To this agrees the prophet: "But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin," Micah, iii. 8. Again: one of his operations produceth sorrow, which arises from a sense of sin, being grieved at it, and hating ourselves for the commission of it, and mourning after God, and after forgiveness and reconciliation with him; which sorrow is drawn forth by discoveries of his goodness, and stirred up by the Holy Spirit, who testifies of Christ to us, and who produceth this godly sorrow, which terminates in repentance. Under this operation Hannah endured her affliction of barrenness and persecution; and under the same she went to Shiloh.

Another of his operations is often felt in prayer: when he quickens us to feel our need; shews us the things that are freely given us of God; furnishes our mouths with arguments, and our souls with energy, till nothing in heaven or earth can stand before us. This is helping our infirmities, and making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

As a spirit of faith, he will at times equip the soul with such confidence, that even things impossible to nature are performed without a doubt, an if, or a but. Under this operation

Sarah received strength to conceive; and under the same David met the Goliath of Gath.

Almighty faith the promise sees,
And trusts in Christ alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And says it shall be done.

Again: when a child of God is called to endure a great fight of affliction, in order that he may endure them, and not be moved by them, he is wonderfully influenced with meekness and patience. Hence we read so much of the meekness of Moses, and of the patience of Job.

In defending and protecting the believer against the cunning craftiness of those heretics which circulate damnable heresies, the Spirit's power is not a little seen in setting truth before their eyes, and in applying it with power to the heart, so as to render it impossible for the most subtle seducer to seduce a chosen vessel. Thus he guides us into all truth, and is called the spirit of a sound mind.

Nor are his influences less upon an awakened sinner, whom, as a spirit of life, he quickens to feel every sin brought to his mind and memory, and the guilt of them; yea, he makes his sensations so keen, that the wrath, the frowns, rebukes, and reproofs of God are all felt and feared; yea, every word of truth that militates against him is felt, and the poor sinner trembles at it; and wonderfully is such a poor creature supported under the weight of guilt and wrath that lies on him, and the sore buffetings and accusations of Satan, though it is imperceptible to him. But sure I am, that no soul, without almighty power and momentary support, can stand upon this ground; black despair, or wild destruction, must ensue. But as our day is so shall our strength be.

The same spirit that convinces us of our sin supports us under our convictions.

Another of his operations is that of a comforter; which comfort is produced by believing views of Christ, and of our interest in him; by shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts; by helping our infirmities in prayer; by applying the blood and righteousness of Christ to us; by witnessing our adoption; and by applying promise upon promise to our souls, while we suck those choice breasts of consolation, milk out and are delighted with the abundance of Zion's glory, and by giving us the first-fruits, powers, earnest, pledges, and foretastes of the world to come; which are streams from the river of divine pleasure flowing from the fountain of life, and are intended to make glad the city of God, the sacred places of the tabernacles of the Most High.

As a spirit of revelation he leads us into the mysteries of the kingdom, and into the secret councils and purposes of God, into his decrees and covenants, and gives us bright views of the ancient settlements of eternity, and of the glorious and rich displays of grace; and leads us to see a blessed harmony in the doctrines of the gospel, and produces harmony in our mind and judgment; and a most sweet peace and tranquillity of soul follow upon these things. An earnest desire to establish thee is the cause of my leading thy mind through the above operations.

As to myself, my heart has long sunk and rose with my country. I view Old England as the seat of the church of the living God, and the valley of vision, Isa. xxii. 1. And, because of the house of the Lord my God, I will seek my country's good. Every time that I hear of any success attending the French I find uncommon energy in prayer against them; and every time they are defeated my soul pours forth her gratitude to my God. In all the circle of my acquaintance, whether in town or country, I do not know one child of God, who really knows his own heart, and the great Physician, but what has an earnest desire, a prayer, and a cry in his heart to God

against that base nation. And who furnishes us with these desires and prayers? That God that will fulfil our desires, and grant the request of our lips; for sure I am that the Spirit maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God, but never contrary to it. I believe I have some knowledge of about thirty persons who, in their simplicity, have inadvertently sucked in the venom of Tom Paine; and nothing but barrenness, confusion, guilt, and bondage followed them. But, as soon as God led me to shew his mind and will concerning it, they fell before it; and, by the furnace of affliction and humbling grace, they brought it up, and returned to their rest. But some few that I know have drunk deep into it; and these, like the house of Eli, will not be easily purged, either by sacrifice or offering. They are too wise to be instructed, and too strong to be brought down to submit to the word of truth. No private prayer, nor public warning, hath any effect upon them. And this hath made them manifest to me, and to many more. And I believe in my heart that their wisdom will terminate in their own destruction, because they have not hearkened to my counsel, 2 Chron. xxv. 16. God will destroy the fat and the strong; he will feed them with judgment, Ezek. xxxiv. 16. And I know of no professors so strong, in the worst sense, as those which faithful reproof cannot pull down. But my God will never look to, nor dwell with, any but those who are of a humble and a contrite spirit, and who tremble at his word. An awful proof of this hath lately been discovered. A man who resided not far from the chapel, and who had attended me for some time diligently, and appeared to be a reformed man, and began to call upon God, and kept up prayer in his family, and, as Paul says of the Galatians, seemed to run well, but Satan hindered him, by conveying the sentiments of Tom Paine to his mind; at which time he became a sworn enemy to government, and of course associated with those who could strengthen his hands in rebellion.

Nevertheless, he did not leave the chapel, nor drop prayer in his family. And, though I was often led to bear my testimony against that informal spirit yet he stood his ground 55e ; he obeyed not the voice of his teacher, nor was he to be fed with that part of God's wholesome word which tells every soul to be subject to the higher powers. But it was not long before God fed him with judgment; for when I preached the "Watchword and Warning" he was there and God sent it home to his heart and down he went; and when he got home he told his wife that he was a damned man, and that he was in the state that I had described; and from that time he left off praying. Soon after this he got up to Kensington palace; and there he cursed and blasted the king, and told the people that he was king. Some of the military hearing of this, took him into custody; but, perceiving him out of his mind, they dismissed him. Thus he began with that doctrine that holds up the majesty of the people; and, when given up to the devil, he proclaimed himself a king. But, if we are obedient unto death, we shall be more; for, "He hath made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign for ever and ever." Adieu.

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita

Letter XXXIII.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

I HAVE received your epistle, for which I feel more thanks in my heart than I have words to express. I believe I shah ever remain the greatest debtor you have; and I am sure I shall never be able to pay one mite towards it. But I know the Lord will return you fourfold; because he has said," Whatsoever ye have done unto one of these my little ones, ye have done it unto me." You have never yet denied me any one request I have made; the consideration of which emboldens me to come to you again with some difficulty which I have upon my mind. I told you, in my last, that what you mentioned in your former Letter of the latter rain which was to come down on the believer at death, had, in some measure, released my mind from some fears which I have been long harassed with. I thank you for enlarging on the subject. Indeed, the matter lay with much weight on my mind. You mention this passage, viz. that the righteous have bands in their death; and that these shah be the last fetters that shall be broken. I am in the dark what these bands are; but it seems they are to snap at a dying hour. But yet you call the work that is to be done on the soul at that time the greatest work of all. Is it not Strange, then, that my mind should be again brought into bondage under the fear of death? You told me, in a former Letter, that we were travelling in the same path; but, indeed, I 1b62 think it is otherwise now. But you must judge when I give you an account of my present feelings. And one thing in your Letter confirms me in it, viz. where you say that the daily cross, which is intended to counteract the devices of Satan, the workings of the old man, and the pleasing desires of the flesh, is not all you expect in the course of your pilgrimage; but that you expect some familiar visits, fresh love-tokens, confirming

renewals, and promised revivals, of the good work of God, even unto the end. This is the place I seem to turn out of your path; and, indeed, I have at present no such things in expectation. And it seems to me that I am confirmed in this by the word of God. The passage I refer to is recorded in Ezekiel; "But, when the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth in by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate; he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it," Ezek. xlvi. 9. The latter part of this verse seems to comprehend my past experience, my present feelings, and my future path, and has involved my mind in much darkness and gloominess; and I am led to believe that I am more interested in the mystical sense of this passage than any one upon earth. And it is this text that has cut off all my expectations of future enlargement while in this world; which is also confirmed to me by what Mr. Hart says in one of his hymns:

 Their pardon some receive at first,
 And then compell'd to fight,
 They find their latter stages worst,
 And travel much by night.

The above passage in Ezekiel has been on my mind for twelvemonth past, and I have thought that there has been a great depth in the words; but they never brought any difficulty on my mind till about a month ago, when it forcibly struck me that I was so much concerned in them; and I have also many things to confirm me in it. You have told me, and so have others, that the Lord has dealt with me in a singular manner, both with respect to the degree and duration of those spiritual joys and consolations which I have been favoured with in times past. And what inference can be drawn from it but that which is meant by coming in by the south gate, and that I am

no more to return by the way of the gate whereby I came in, but I am to go forth by the way of the north gate? And I believe the north and south gate mean the same operations as the north and south wind. Will you grant me this request also, that is, to give me your thoughts on the passage. I do assure you it is not a matter of curiosity. I do believe you will sympathize with me, and feel for me, and pray for me. This seems to be the sharpest trial I have lately had; though, blessed be the Lord, I feel no shakings nor unsealings respecting my state. But I have at present no light on my path; and, to my dark understanding, that text has made a discord in the word of God, and seems to clash with such passages as this, "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" and this also, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up on wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint." But, instead of this, my expectations are of more darkness, sharper trials, being perpetually under the hiding of God's face; and, indeed, I am already in the dark path. God says, in his word, that he will abundantly bless the provisions of his house, and that he will satisfy his poor with bread; that his priests shall be clothed with salvation, and his saints shall shout aloud for joy. But, instead of this, I have lately been very barren under the word. I have seen the provision blessed to others, but nothing under the priest's hands for me. He has been clothed with salvation, and the food has been so blessed to others, that I have seen them shout aloud for joy, while I have hung down my head like a bulrush. God says, that those who are planted in his house shall flourish in his courts; that they shall be fat and flourishing: instead of this, I am crying out "My leanness, my leanness! wo unto me:" though there is no famine of the word, but bread enough and to spare. But I know I have procured all this to myself by my pride, and by that folly that is bound up in my heart; and there it is like to remain, unless the rod of correction drives it out. I think the prophet Isaiah speaks also

of this darkness that I feel, where he says "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light?" and then he enjoins the hardest work of all, when he says, "Let him trust in the name O! the Lord, and stay himself upon his God," because he mentions his God. I infer, therefore, that he means the darkness that I am in; because, through all, I have not been led to cast away my confidence; because I think that this trial comes from God himself, for I cannot see that Satan has any hand in it; so it must be God, I think, that laid that passage with such a weight on my mind. But, perhaps, when you read this, you will see for me as you have done oft times before. You tell me you have an earnest desire to establish me; and this last epistle is not less precious to me than the former; and indeed I do feel my love to you in the Lord increasing in whatever frame I am; and I firmly believe you are to be the instrument of confirming the work that God has done upon my soul by the ministry of my dear father in Christ. I have some things on my mind that, were it expedient, I would communicate to you; but there is at present a lion in the way. I have had many pros and cons on my mind since I received your last whether I should write to you or not. But I believe you are to know all my heart. May the Lord give you something for me that shall bring my mind forth from out of these dark regions; for I seem held fast where I am, and that with a strong hand. I know there hath been many things which you have predicted to me that I could not believe till they came to pass. But true it is that not one word you have spoken to me has fell to the ground; nor have I found you a false prophet in any of your predictions. I was glad to hear you was better in bodily health. We shall be glad to see you in our parts again; and believe me to remain, as much as ever,

Your affectionate friend, but unworthy sister in the Lord,
The King's Dale.

Philomela

Letter XXXIV.

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

Your last is now before me; and I have just as much right to thank you for it, as you have to thank me for mine; for, if any thing from me may cast a ray of light on thy mind, or on thy path, I am often rewarded in answering thine by some fresh thoughts, or new discoveries, which are often attended with devotional sensations, which melt my soul down, and draw out my gratitude to the best of all friends.

"The wicked have no bands in their death, their strength is firm." But remember, it is their strength. Satan, who blinds their eyes, and keeps their conscience asleep, is the strong man armed, that fortifies their carnal mind, and supports their false confidence and vain hope, even when launching forth into the bottomless pit. These, our Lord tells us, lift up their eyes in hell, and never before. But we, my dear sister, are planted together in the likeness of Christ's death, as well as in the likeness of his resurrection, and must indeed drink of the cup that he drank of. And it is well known that he had bands in his death; for Christ was a bond-servant under the law, as appears by the thirty pieces of silver which he was sold for; which was the price to be paid, according to the law, to the owner of a bond-servant which had been gored to death by the horns of a beast. Read and compare Exod. xxi. chap. with Psalm xxii. and Zech. xi. 12. The Saviour's worst bands were our sins, his Father's wrath, and the Powers of darkness. When the prince of this world came to him to bruise his heel, these deep waters entered his soul, Psalm lxxix. 1; besides the insults of the Jews, and the excruciating pains of his body. But all these pains of death were loosed, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it, Acts, ii. 24. Our worst bands are the corruptions of our heart, the law in our

members, and inbred sin that works in us, and will work in us as long as we live. These often make us halt, faint, and stumble, and often betray us into a spirit of legal bondage, and procure us many chastisements, many spiritual desertions, and much fatherly anger. And these sensible suspensions of divine favour, frowns, stripes, and bondage, when sanctified, are intended to purge the branch, that it may bring forth more fruit. Not a few of these purging draughts have fallen to thy share already in the short course of thy pilgrimage; and when humbling grace operates, how are our sinful stirrings subdued, how are they detested, and for a while out of sight, when sweet love, meekness, contrition, godly sorrow, self-abhorrence, unfeigned faith and abounding hope, much peace and divine tranquillity, all appear uppermost in the soul, and make it look like a bride adorned with her jewels. This, my dear sister, is what I mean by bands in the saints' death. These corruptions will stick by us to the last, and Satan often works sadly in them and by them; and it is generally seen, though not always, that the child of God, on his death-bed, is not a little exercised with them; as it will be even with the wise virgins when the midnight cry comes. An alarm will go forth; then they will arise and examine themselves, and there will be a little purging work go on upon them; some sharp reproofs, some melting and humbling trials; and then a restoring of them to the joys of the Lord's salvation. Trimming of lamps consists in wiping them out, cutting off the burnt snuffs, pouring in fresh oil, and lighting them up, that the light of the righteous may rejoice when the lamp of the wicked is put out. But the creature, the new creature, the whole mystical body of Christ, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and be brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; for this is the earnest expectation of every new creature in Christ Jesus. For this creature was made subject to vanity, or death, Gen. iii. 19; Eccl. iii. 19, 20; not willingly, for death is not desirable in itself; but God hath subjected us to it in hope, that our souls may be delivered from all

corruption at our departure out of this world; that we may have hope of glory in death, and leave the body to rest behind us, in hope of a glorious resurrection, which will be the last work of hope in this world. Thus we must hope to the end, and no longer; for what a man seeth himself in full possession of why doth he yet hope for?

But because I told you, in my last, that "I expected some familiar visits, love-tokens, confirming renewals, and promised revivals, in the course of my pilgrimage, even to the end, as well as a daily cross," I have staggered you; and, in the expectation of these things, you say you seem to turn out of my path. No, no, my sister; I ran to the same extremes that you do. When in my first love I said, and believed it too, that I should never be moved from the mount, the Lord of his goodness had made my hill so strong; but, when spiritual desertions came on, and Satan returned with double rage, and every inherent corruption was stirred up, attended with legal bondage and slavish fear, I then concluded, as Job did, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope; O remember that my life is wind, mine eye shall no more see good!" Job, vii. 6, 7. David was wrong in his exultation, for God hid his face from him. Job was wrong also in his lamentation, for the Lord appeared to him clearer than ever he did before. I was wrong also, for I have had hundreds of visits since I drew those sad conclusions; and you are wrong, for he will revive and renew his work on thy soul, and bring it to light, and confirm you in it again and again: "They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine, and spread forth their roots like Lebanon." If they revive, there must be more life; if they grow, there must be more grace given; and, if they spread forth their roots, their love must be drawn forth, for we are to be rooted and grounded in love; and, if we are to root like Lebanon, we must be strengthened, stablished, and settled, this way. But you inform me that you have no such expectations, and that you are confirmed in your opinion by

the word of the Lord itself. The passage you allude to in Ezek. xlv. 9, you do not rightly understand. That the temple spoken of in that chapter was a type of the church of God under the New Testament is plain, for the church bears the same name; and that all the furniture of the temple, in its gospel signification, is now found in gospel Zion, cannot be denied; and that there are such things as north and south winds, which blow on the Lord's garden, I hinted to you in a former epistle; and likewise I mentioned Solomon's trees, which he represents as falling toward the north and toward the south, and of their unalterable state after they are fallen; and no doubt but the north and south gates that you allude to have the same signification. Suppose a poor sinner is seized with a spirit of bondage to fear, and wrath and guilt work in him till his soul is chilled, and he filled with fear and trembling: this is the north wind, the spirit of bondage, which is the wrath of God. But at length he is enabled to fly from wrath to come, and to embrace the hope set before him; and he exercises faith on the Saviour, and comes sensibly into his favour, into his grace, and into his finished salvation. He then passes from death to life, and shall never more come into condemnation. He enters by the north gate. Christ to him is the gate of life, and the end of the law for righteousness. His faith now works by love; and as lovingkindness is never to be taken from him, he shall go out at the south gate. But then, what is or can be meant by going out of the church? Why, in one sense, the believer can never go out at all; for he that overcometh is made a pillar in the temple of God, and he shall go no more out. Going out, therefore, can mean nothing but a being translated from the militant to the triumphant church by death. Moreover, suppose a person, at his first setting off in a profession, is allured and drawn into it by a sense of God's goodness, and a believing view of his kind providence, as Hezekiah was, and as Job seems to be, and the north wind, or a spiritual bondage, falls upon him, as it did upon those two men, that they might see the hand-writing that was against

then, and that they might know the sin of their heart by the application of the law; this alters not the state of their souls; they were members of Christ before, so they were when in their troubles, and they were more sure of this when their deliverance came. It remains, therefore, that it cannot, in the worst sense, mean a real believer; for, though he may be exercised in his pilgrimage, and on his death-bed, with legal bondage, yet he cannot go out of the church, and out of the world, under the wrath of God, nor yet in bondage; his end must be peace, not wrath. The covenant, the oath of God, the pro-raise of life, the death of Christ, and the Spirit's work, all forbid this. To conclude this subject, in the strictest and worst sense of the words, the comer-in at the south gate is the way-side hearer, who has his natural affections and passions stirred up; in whom light, joy, gills, and zeal, spring up; and who, in time of temptation and persecution, falls away, and goes out of the church, and into the world, and then out of the world under the wrath and curse of God. And this character is further described by this prophet in the 16th verse of the same chapter; and Chris 119c t, in his days, quotes the words, and then applies them: "Thus saith the Lord God, If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons; it shall be their possession by inheritance." This inheritance is eternal life; and Christ came that we might have it; and he that hath it, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; for Christ came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. "But, if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince," Ezek. xlvi. 17. Our Saviour's explanation and application of this text is, "Take the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents; for he that hath not [hath not life, but a spiritual gift], it shall be taken away from him, even that which he hath." And it is often seen that a servant cuts a most glaring figure in the church of God, until the spirit of love and liberty be poured forth upon some of the elect of God about him; and when he sees this,

he sinks in his soul at the sight, and at the light, and hates it, as Saul did, when he saw that God was with David. Such an one sinks in the esteem of such heaven-born souls as much as Saul did in the eyes of Samuel, when he said, "Honour me now before the elders of my people." Nothing discovers a false profession, and a false professor, like the spirit of love and liberty being poured out upon poor broken-hearted sinners about him; and, if it come upon such as have looked up to him as something great, discriminating grace discovers him. At this he is offended, and hates the light, and flees from it, and fights against it; and this withers his joys, it blasts his zeal and diligence, and dries up the glee of his animal spirits, and natural abilities too; so that his gifts return to the prince, and he gives the talent to others. He that receives this gift is a servant, and he comes in at the south gate. He begins his profession with having his passions moved, and his natural affection stirred up, and comes in at the south gate; and when the jubilee comes, he either takes offence at it, or else, in persecution and temptation, falls away, and legal bondage seizes him, and he goes back to the first husband, the law, never being divorced from it: and this is going out of the north gate. And, when death cuts such a corrupt tree down, the tree falls toward the north; and where the tree falls there it shall lie. But the name and title of the other is that of a son; and his inheritance shall not be taken from him, nor shall he go out of the church but by death: he came in by the north gate. A spirit of bondage, sooner or later, more or less, doth exercise all the elect of God, till love casts their fears out: such come in by the north gate, and shall go out by the south. Death cuts that tree of righteousness down, and it falls toward the south; and in the place where it falls there it shall lie.

I must confess that I rather wonder at your giving up all expectations of sensible visits from God by the way, only from your constructions, put upon that dark and ambiguous text; "An enemy hath done this." God will never apply any passage

of his word in a sense that shall run counter to the whole current of scripture. "I am with you alway to the world's end." "I will water them every moment. I will keep them night and day." "Their leaf shall be green; nor shall they cease from yielding fruit." And sure I am that heaven and earth shall pass away before a jot or tittle of his word shall fail. And as sure as temptations, desertions, legal bondage, or unbelief, obscure the good work on thy heart, so sure will God shine upon it, revive it, revive it and bring it forth to light again; "Being confident of this very thing, that he, which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ," when it shall be perfected, both in body and soul. In this confidence, and in the best of bonds, I remain

Yours to serve for his sake,

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter XXXV

To Noctua Aurita, of the Desert.

I HAVE received your Letter, which came to me wet with the dew of heaven; and therefore I must call it Gideon's fleece, when it was taken out of the floor wet. I hope you will excuse my coming to you so soon; but really I could stay no longer. By your Letter my mind is entirely delivered from that darkness which has entangled me for these three months past respecting the coming in by the south gate, and going forth by the north, &c. I believe Satan never had before such a simple fool to deal with. I perceive he is the enemy that has done me all this mischief; but he is now discovered. I know it was he that applied that passage to my mind, and made me believe that it was left on record on purpose for me, and could be applicable to no one's case but mine. I can see now, as clear as I can see the sun at noon day, when he entered first, and the ends he had in view; and, by my relating to you the exercises I have passed under since I wrote you that Letter, I think you will see it too. You know he had then gained his point so far as to cut off all my expectations of being favoured with any more revivings, renewings or sensible manifestations of the Lord's love and favour towards me while in this world; and he brought the word of God to prove it, which was, that I was to go out by the north gate: therefore there was nothing but gloominess and darkness felt by me 18e6 . This caused my hands to hang down, and my knees to wax feeble, and nothing was expected by me but more darkness and misery; and this did come to pass, for I got deeper and deeper. in distress and darkness. This confirmed me yet more that it was God himself that had laid that passage with such a weight on my mind. This strengthened my bands, and made them still tighter; and, after three or four weeks had passed, and I had

received no answer from you to my Letter, he came to me thus, and insinuated that I was not on your heart and in your affections as formerly; and that God had taken me off, and that he would not suffer you to send me a word more, nor even to pray for me; and then set before me what a curse that soul must be under that was not on the heart of the servants of the Lord, because he says that whatsoever they bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever they loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; though I know I did never wholly credit this lie of his; but it was but one thing that kept me from it, and that was this, I thought God would not take me off the heart of one of his servants without taking me off the heart of the other; and with respect to that being the case with my dear pastor, the King's herald, Satan was not permitted to assault me with, for I had had proof enough of late that I was more on his heart than ever; and I had not a doubt on my mind but he did pray for me.

O, blessed be the Lord that he can go no further than he is permitted! Satan proceeded against me with great caution, lest he should be discovered. He was slow, but sure to deceive so far; but he had not got to the length of his chain yet. About a fortnight ago he came to me in a vision of the night. I dreamed I was in a barn-floor, and had got a halter about my neck to hang myself, but was prevented. However, soon after I found the halter round my neck the second time, in a hitch knot, fastened to a beam above my head, and myself standing some considerable height from the ground; and I was just stretching forth my hands to give myself a swing off the place, when instantly awoke, in such horror, and in such darkness, as it is impossible for me to describe, and with a conviction on my mind that the dream was a prediction of the awful end I should make, and that this was what was meant by going out by the north gate. Every thing was hid from my sight that God had done for my soul; the bed could not contain me long; and in this situation and conflict I was

four days and nights. This surely must be what David meant when he said the pains of hell got hold of him; for sure I am that my feelings were similar to what the damned in hell feel. Here I let go my hold of the Bock, and so I lay exposed to all the shafts of Satan; and this was his hour, and the powers of darkness; for there was nothing to resist him, for I had not one piece of that armour that God has provided in exercise; and sure I am that, if my safety had depended on my hold of the Rock, I had sunk to rise no more. But the Rock held me, and followed me through this dark path. The third day I could write a few lines to his excellency, and he sent me a Letter; and God did give him a word for me which did in a measure abate the violence of the temptation. He told me it was Satan, and I was helped in a measure to believe it; and I felt a calmness in my mind, and these words afforded some consolation to me, namely, the conversation between John and the angel in the Revelation, where he says, "Who are these, and whence came they?" and the angel's reply, "These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God." I saw much in this word, therefore; by it I clearer than ever saw that there was no getting to heaven but through a rough path; and these words of James added something to the calm on my mind, "Blessed is he that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life." And I know that I had been made to endure this conflict, and also who had supported me through it. But Satan was not fully discovered till I received your Letter; and when I had read it twice, I said with David, "Though an host encamp against me, I will not fear; though war rise up against me, in this will I be confident, for God is with me of a truth." And sure I am that all that Satan has told me about not being on your heart as aforetime, is a lie. And the Lord has been-pleased to set his broad seal to the contents of your Letter, that my mind might be, if possible, more than fully satisfied that it came from him, and that you gave me the mind

of the Spirit; for on reading the xlvith of Ezekiel after perusing your Letter, and after reading the 10th verse, which says, "And the prince in the midst of them when they go in shall go in, and when they go forth shall go forth;" to think Satan should hold me in such darkness so long quite astonished me, when that one verse is quite sufficient to prove all the interpretations that he had put on the verse before to be nothing but lies. After I had communicated the dream and the conflict to his Majesty's herald, I had concluded never to rehearse it again; but the light that accompanied your Letter to me made me alter my mind, for I thought you would see more of the work of Satan and his craft than I could. May the Lord bless you with the blessings of the upper and nether springs, and abundantly reward all your labours of love to my soul! This is, and ever will be, the prayer (when privileged with access to God) of

Your very sincere and affectionate sister in the bonds of the gospel,

The King' s Dale.

Philomela.

P.S. My partner unites with me in kind love We should be very glad to see you at our cottage this summer; and the poor Shunamite will be very glad to accommodate you with a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick.

Letter XXXVI.

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

Yours came safe to hand; in which you intimate that the snare of the fowler is, in some measure, broken. Satan can quote and apply scripture when it will serve his own turn; but he is never divided against himself in that work.

As the angels were the first creatures that God made, and are called the morning stars, and sons of God, who sung their anthem together, and shouted for joy at the creation of the world, Job, xxxviii. 7; so I have no doubt but they were present when God gave the law to Adam, as they were also at the giving it to Israel at Sinai, Heb. ii. 2. And this appears plain by Satan, after his fall from heaven, quoting the word of God in his first attempt to deceive Eve: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" He used the same art in his tempting Christ to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple: "It is written," saith Satan, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up," Matt. iv. 6.

In this way Satan labours to discourage every broken-hearted sinner whom the Lord hath awakened, quickened, and wounded; I mean, by quoting and applying the most terrible texts of scripture to them, which he does to obstruct our way to Christ, to dishearten us, to sink us in despair, and to stop the mouth of prayer, and to stir up hard thoughts of Christ; and some of the most alarming passages in the Bible are thrown as stumbling blocks in our way, and we stumble upon the dark mountains of Sinai, and stumble at election and at reprobation, Zech. vi. 1; Heb. xii. 18. In this way he harassed me, by bringing continually to my mind the unpardonable sin, or sin unto death; and that of Esau's finding no place of

repentance, though he sought it with tears; the deplorable state of Saul, when God answered him no more; that also of man giving an account at the day of judgment for every idle word; and the soul that sins shall die: all these, and many more of the like import, were perpetually brought to my mind with forcible suggestions that I was the man; and that God had sent me into the world, as he did Pharaoh, to shew his wrath and power in me. These, and many more, were brought hourly to me, and set before me as my sorrowful meat. And who applied them to me? not God; for, if he had, they must all have been fulfilled; for whatever God says, whether against us or for us, shall most surely come to pass. But none of these came to pass with me in the way that Satan predicted they would.

But, on the other hand, every promise that God sent to me stood fast. The first word that ever came to me from him was, "Believe that I am in you, and you in me;" and that moment everlasting light shone into my soul, to shew me where I was; and there it is to this day.

The next was, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." God did enable me to overcome in that dreadful temptation; and I believe to this day that God hath called me that I might receive the reward of eternal inheritance.

The next was, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And at that time righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, filled my heart.

Being once much concerned in my mind about the state of many poor quiet people who did not run to the same excess of riot as many do, I asked the Lord what would become of them, and he said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Being at another time brought into bondage by disputing with an old Arminian, and being sadly tossed in my mind between free will and free grace, and some passages of scripture which seem to favour both, the Lord spoke to me thus, "Do not the scriptures say that no man can come to me except the Father draw him?" I answered, I know they say so. Then it came again saying, "If you can find a place where it says that a man can come without being drawn, then you may prove the Bible lies;" and away went all my confusion and bondage, and sweet tranquillity followed. From that moment Arminianism kicked the beam, nor did it ever stagger me afterwards; and I am at a point that none but the devil is the author of that system.

When I carried coals, a person came into the neighbourhood, and took a room for an Oxford Blue to preach in. A voice told me that the room was opened for me. When the man came to speak his mouth was stopped, and I was invited to speak there, which I afterwards did for some years.

One Sunday morning, going out to hear a minister that was to preach out of doors, a voice came to me, saying, "You must preach out of doors to-day;" and it told me what text I was to speak from also; and the minister that was expected disappointed the people, for he came not; so they constrained me to speak, which I did all that summer, and the summer following.

Being once in great distress and want, these words were spoken to my heart, "I know thy tribulation, and poverty; but thou art rich." And I believe, with my whole heart, that the Lord did take notice of my poverty and sufferings, by his kind appearance for me afterwards in providence; and that the Lord is the portion of my soul I have no doubt, for he hath redeemed me; and, "The ransom of a man's life are his riches," Prov. xiii. 8. When he sent me to London he told me

to "prophesy upon the thick boughs." And surely none could be more opposed than I have been, by almost every dissenting minister and congregation; besides the oppositions that I have met with from false-hearted friends, from worldlings, from devils, heretics, and hypocrites. And still the boughs are thick, and thick they will be as long as it pleases God to speak by me.

When I had that disturbance in the church, which you know of, God told me, by his Spirit, that he would avenge his own elect. And no small number have got that vengeance lodged in their conscience to this day; besides the many that went out of the world in less than two years after God had discovered the bane of their hearts.

Soon after this, when I was wondering at their hardness of heart, and hearing of their continual calumny, he spoke these words to me, "When they shall cease to deal treacherously thou shalt deal treacherously with them." This passage shewed me that they were to fill up their measure this way, and to go on reproaching me till they were weary of it; and that some would then desire to come back again; and that others, in their distress, when the judgments of God overtook them, would come to me for my counsel and my prayers; and, further, that I should be a savour of death unto death to them in my ministry, and a witness against them in the day of judgment; the former has come to pass already, and so will the latter.

When Europe appeared in such confusion under the influence of that spirit of rebellion which the devil, by the instrumentality of Tom Paine, poured out upon men, I had long begged of God to shew me what part of his word contained this perilous time, and he told me it was the hour of temptation, as is related in a sermon lately published by me. And it was explained to me as being the same trial as came upon the

Jews in the days of Jeremiah; and that it was sent to try the obedience of professors, and the loyalty of the nations; and I soon perceived that no class of men in this nation were more easily taken, nor more effectually bound in these bonds of iniquity, than the hypocrites in Zion, and impostors in the ministry; and the calamity of both will come suddenly upon them. Thus my dear sister may see that what God speaks and applies comes to pass. But all the fearful predictions which came to me from Satan, in the days of my trouble, fell to the ground. And as Satan can apply scripture, so can he also work by dreams. All the fearful and miserable dreams which he tormented me with, such as dying by suicide, being thrown into wells, and down unfathomable precipices, and being burnt alive, and of coming to the worst of ends, and by dying innumerable deaths; have none of them, as yet, come to pass; nor do I believe they ever will; whereas the dreams Which came from God all came to pass. One which I had in my distress was, I was climbing up the outside of a most spacious fine building, but many enemies opposed me; but I gained the height in spite of them all.

Another was a most furious attack of a dreadful and formidable monster to devour me; but, though he made several attempts, ye he could not come near me by several feet. I wondered at this, and looking up, saw a beautiful man smiling at me, and holding a chain in his hand, which chain Was round the body of the beast, just as a monkey is chained. And I believe the Saviour holds the devil in chains to this day; so that he cannot destroy God's people, though he often tries.

I had another dream, which was that of two innumerable armies drawn up to engage on a very high and spacious plain. I was there to watch their motions, and to hear tidings; and, as soon as they began to engage, off I set over the plain and down into a narrow road, through a low and hollow field: the cannon and muskets roaring as I ran, I thought they might kill

me; but, looking towards the plain, I saw a very high stone wall between me and the plain, and that the plain was level with the top of the wall, and the village to which I bore tidings was in a lane at the bottom of the field in which I was. Soon after this the war broke out; and I have borne tidings throughout this war, and the wall of salvation hath protected both me, and those who have received my tidings, even to this day.

Soon after this I had another dream, which was, that I saw a very high and strong fence, somewhat like posts and rails, but exceeding strong, and the top of it reached to the clouds; on the other side I saw a numerous herd of black bulls, exceeding fierce, and they leaped, many of them, clear over this high fence. When I awoke, I conceived the high fence to be the laws of nations, and the boundaries or frontiers of countries; and, when I heard how the French overran divers nations, and how the disaffected were let loose here among us, I thought of the fat bulls of Bashan, mentioned in the Psalms and other scriptures. Some I saw in my dreams could not leap over, and those that did could not destroy the fence, for that stood firm, just as it was. And so I have seen it; the bulwarks of national laws stand as they did; and our disaffected, who tried hard to leap over, could not; and those that did will never leap back again. This my dream came fresh to my mind when I saw in the newspapers that the French commander in Italy informed the Directory of his engagement on the mountains, saying that his army fought above the clouds.

Thus I have informed my dear sister of the various applications the most terrible passages of scripture to me in my deepest distress, and of the fearful dreams; neither of which came to pass, being the work of the devil, to keep me from Christ. And this I was confirmed in by the Lord's visits to me; for every glimpse that I had of the Saviour dispersed

these dismal things; but, when he withdrew, then they came again. It is with the seeking sinner as it was with the lunatic in the gospel, while he was coming to Christ the devil threw him down, Luke, ix. 42. Furthermore: not only by fearful dreams and false applications hath Satan distressed me, but even by horrible sensations in the night; and that even when I have gone to bed in the most profound peace and tranquillity, without the least sense of any guilt, shyness, or distance, between me and my God; yea, and sometimes when I have been much favoured with his sensible presence overnight. I have often, in former years, waked up in the dead of the night, and felt that my comforts were all gone, and a most melancholy and dismal gloom hung upon my mind, and such horrors and terrors had succeeded as quite terrified me, and such darkness as might be felt, with a multitude of the most ghastly spectres drawn upon my imagination, with death and the grave represented in their most dreadful forms and awful consequences. These things drove me to examine myself, and to seek the face of the Lord; and, when I found that prayer dispelled them, and the Lord. appeared still propitious to me, and that none of these things brought any guilt on my conscience, and that they were not attended with the burden of unpardoned sin, nor with the piercing sensations of unappeased wrath, nor with the curse of the law, nor with the apprehensions of an angry God, nor with any dread of damnation; I concluded that they came from the devil, and the word of God bore me out: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty;" such "shall not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon day," Psalm xci. 1, 5 I was not a little exercised with very foul dreams also, but prayer removed them all; and Satan hath dropped this method of proceeding against me for many years, for he knows that I am, in some measure, up to it.

Now, as Satan thus works against sensible sinners, whose hearts are honest, and who come constantly to the light to have their real state discovered, and who are made willing to take up the cross, to follow Christ, and to be saved by him; I say, as Satan works against these by fearful dreams, and applications of the most terrible passages of scripture; so, on the other hand, by applying the promises to hypocrites, and by encouraging dreams, he also deceives them, and leads them into perilous presumption. I once was acquainted with a great professor, who was a man of much wealth, and who stood very high in his confidence, too high to admit of any doubting in believers. This person invited me and my wife to come and dine with him, which we did; and he told us of a wonderful view that he had had, and of a voice that had spoken to him; both of which were respecting the sonship of Christ; and he was so pleased and charmed with his wild conceit, that he put it in the newspaper. He and I could not agree in our opinions; we differed widely. He laboured hard to gain me over to his sentiments, but I was inflexible; and therefore he ordered me out of his house, and I obeyed and went out; and as soon as I was gone out, I told my wife that that man would go mad; and, about seven years after that, he went raving mad, and died so.

I knew another, a woman, and a very sensible one, and who attended for many years one of the brightest ministers which the church of England hath lately been honoured with, and was very fond of his ministry; nor could she sit under any other. This woman had the promises of the gospel continually applied to her, as she thought, and mentioned many of them to me; and I once asked her how it was that none of them came to pass? She replied, "I know that they must all be fulfilled," and added, "God cannot be just except he does fulfil them." Soon after this she had heard that I had insisted that God required worship in spirit and in truth; and that a form of prayer was not sufficient; and that some things in our forms of

prayer were repugnant to scripture. At this she was much exasperated, and said, "Such a fellow as that presume to take the work of our great reformers to pieces!" At last she began to sink in her confidence, and fearful bondage came upon her, which made her a burden to herself, and to all about her. A near relation of hers brought her up to my house in Winchester-row; but I was not at home. The request of her relation was, that she might come and lodge and board with me. My wife gave her to understand that it would not be agreeable; so she went away, and not long afterwards she hung herself upon her bed's head; which fully convinced me that the implacable enemy of mankind had deceived her by applying those promises to her.

Poor Tom Smith, whom you know, or at least have heard something of, was wonderfully tossed to and fro, up and down, this way, by every scripture that came to his mind, however contradictory; as, for instance; at some times the Lord had told him he was to go and settle at such a place, and then another text contradicted it, that he was to stay where he was. He mentioned to me the fearful state that he had been in, and the temptations that he had to suicide, and of the people that were gathered together about him in this his distress, and of the sudden deliverance, from misery to laughter, by the application of a passage of scripture, which I now forget, and which first set him off in a profession, as one that had obtained mercy; and of his joining himself to a church in the country; and, after some time, that one of my pamphlets fell into his hands, and of his reading it; and of this passage coming into his mind, "I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter." This he looked upon as an order from God to come to London to see me; and he came, but could not find me, and therefore went back again; and if I mistake not, he came again, and found me not. However, the same text followed him, and he came the third time, if I mistake not, but not succeeding, was returning home; but, seeing a road across the fields which led

to Hampstead, some passage occurred to his mind directing him to go there; and thither he went, and inquired of a shoemaker if he knew me: he answered, he did, and gave him a 15cd shilling, and sent him to another person in Hampstead, who knew where I lived; he gave him a direction to me, and put sixpence more into his hand. This appeared a kind providence, for he had no money in his pocket; it served also to confirm him that he was right in seeking me. At first I could make nothing of him, but thought him deranged, and gave him a trifle. However, he kept coming to me; for, Providence thus appearing for him, confirmed him more and more that he was to go and see his supposed Peter; but, when he began to sink, and found his hopes give way, and madness come on, he was much astonished that he could be thus deceived, but was forced to own that the whole was nothing but the works of the devil; and, indeed, self-abhorrence, godly sorrow, evangelical repentance flowing from pardoning love, tenderness, meekness, and an abiding sense of his insufficiency for the great work, never appeared in him.

I once knew a gracious woman who laboured long under heavy persecution both from her husband and his friends, and who was long kept in fears and distress by the following text: "He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country: here shalt thou die," Isaiah, xxii. 18. It is spoken of Shebna's captivity, who was steward and treasurer of the king's household; and the devil applied it to this poor woman, and she construed it to mean that persecution was coming on the church, and that she should be banished into a strange country for her religion. And true enough she was, for soon after she died, and made a most glorious end; nor was there any violent turnings or tossings in her death, for she was taken ill and died in less than ten hours after. Thus the devil can apply scripture when it will serve his own turn, and promote his own interest. His aims with the children of God are to discourage them, to raise doubts in the mind, and to stir

up unbelief; to call the truth of God, and the work of God on their souls, into question, that they may murmur, rebel, be discontented with their state, and unthankful to God for what they have. And here he often prevails by damping their affections, and so robs God of his praise and glory, by tempting the believer that he has no grace to thank God for; and this he partially believes, and so holds back the Lord's revenue. This is a temptation, it is plain, because "every visitation of God disproves it, and expels it."

By applying scripture the devil encourages the presumptuous, and blows them up with pride and vain confidence, to dream of the goodness of their state, without any sight or sense of the heinousness of sin, or any humility under it, or sorrow on the account of it, and even to expect the great reward of inheritance without either pardon, righteousness, or holiness by the Holy Ghost, which alone can give us right unto it, and meetness for it. Under these delusions the consciences of some are seared, so that they have no bands in their death; and the presumptuous, he goes on till his hope expires with him: "Their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost." In short, every believer is conscious to himself that he has a claim upon God, as his covenant God, and an interest in him. This is made manifest to him by the Spirit's work, and by the witness which the Spirit bears with our spirits; and such souls do expect to be dealt with as sons, not as slaves or criminals; and that the promises are yea and amen in Christ, and the reward sure to all the seed; a daily cross, and an ever-abiding Comforter; prosperity and adversity; purging the branch with trials, and making it more fruitful by fresh indulgences, and with union and communion with the living Vine. Thus the sheep which enter by the right door, go in and out, and find pasture. When God speaks to his children his word never contradicts, but always agrees with that teaching which the holy anointing teacheth. Sometimes God speaks to encourage hope and expectation, as to Habakkuk: "The vision is for an

appointed time, wait for it." Sometimes to support and fortify: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days." Sometimes he speaks to stir up diligence: " Seek ye my face." And sometimes to encourage to prayer; "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice." But either power, life, peace, mercy, or love, always attend his voice to those that love his name. But sure I am that he never will send a word to the hearts of his children to make them mourn after his presence all their days, and yet mourn in vain. No; they that mourn shall be comforted: "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." And all real praise must spring from his sensible presence, not his absence; from his goodness, not his anger. Therefore expect the fulfilment of his promises: "I will bear them from the womb, and to your old age I am he; and to hoary hairs will I carry you; even I will bear, and I will deliver you." Dear sister, adieu.

Ever yours in faith and affection,

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter XXXVII.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

I was very glad to hear, by one of your friends from London, that your health was much established by your late excursion. sincerely hope it may please God to continue it to you; and likewise that it would please him that you may again have a prosperous journey to us, that you may come in the fullness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ. I would it was in my power to say a great deal about what I received from your last Letter. But I have apparently lost all that I then received Item it. Had I wrote at the time I received it, I do not know where my pen would run to; and this was what kept me from writing; for my mind has been sorely exercised about my having made so free with you, in writing you such long Letters. But, whether this distress comes from Satan or not, I have not wisdom to discover. However, at the time I read your Letter it did sweetly confirm the work on my soul, and I seemed to be brought to a point about every thing that had been done upon me. But now I have lost all; and I begin to call almost every thing in question.

It is in vain for me to attempt to describe the darkness, deadness, fretfulness, and rebellion, which I feel within. I complain with David, that my strength is dried up like a potsherd. I do believe that there never was such a composition of ingredients in the world before as I am made up of. I am unstable as water; my strength is so small that I faint in every day of adversity. However, it can be of no use troubling you with such things as these; therefore I must conclude; but, amidst all, believe me to remain

Your affectionate friend,

In the briars and thorns.

Philomela.

The master desires his kind love to you. I send you this only by way of telling you that I cannot write.

Letter XXXVIII.

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

I PROMISED myself much happiness and satisfaction in the hope and prospect I had of one more interview with you at Gasson's Bower; and I have no doubt but you expected a second benefit in hearing the joyful sound once more in the old barn. But, alas! our purposes were broken off, even the thoughts of our heart. We decreed the thing, but it was not established unto us. I was to go to the barn, and you sick to bed. O, the disappointment! Had I set out on a tour of pleasure I might justly have expected it; but I went hoping and expecting to hear the voice of my beloved. And was you disappointed? Is there no voice but that of the chief Shepherd by the mouth of his servants? Is there not a voice in Providence? And is there not a voice in his rod? "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it," Micah, vi. 9. The Lord's voice crieth to the city of Zion now as well as to Jerusalem in the days of old; and those who have wisdom shall see the Lord's name; and that name is the angel of the covenant, who went in the cloudy pillar through the wilderness. This name is to be seen by those who have wisdom in the hidden parts of the heart: "All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and the hearts." Therefore hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it; for all these things are appointed for thee, and many such things are with him.

I was much surprised last Lord's-day to hear that thou wast not as yet returned to the King's Dale, but that you was in hope of quitting the Bower this week, being somewhat restored to health again. I wish much to know whether this hath been amongst the all things that work together for good

to them that love God. Hath he fulfilled his promise? Hath he strengthened thee upon the bed of languishing? Hath he made all thy bed in thy sickness? I am persuaded by the Lord that he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, Lam. iii. 33. It is to empty us of self, that we may savour more of him and of his good ointments. if the vessel of mercy goes but for a short space without the rod, without the cross, without discipline, without afflictions, without the furnace, it soon settles upon its old lees, and the scent remains, and we savour not of the things of God, but those of flesh and blood. Sanctified trials banish the spirit of this world from the mind, and keep those worldly cares, which too often choke the word, from rooting in the heart. When God comes with a fiery trial he goes through these briars and thorns, and consumes them altogether, Isa. xxvii. 4. It was these that overtopped the good seed in the thorny-ground hearers. Fiery trials scorch these at the root, and the blasts of divine resentment wither them; and legal bondage to fear drives us to care for matters more weighty, and to seek for a more enduring substance; and, when sensible union with the living Vine begins again to take place, a better crop is produced. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off?," Isa. lv. 13. Divine life within, and a verdant profession without, make the believer appear as a fir tree, the sap of which is always up, and the leaf of which is never withered, but always green; and, when the robe of humility is put on, and the influences of divine grace perfume the soul, it is like the myrtle, low, green, and fragrant; and where these things are experienced, enjoyed, and felt, it is to be to the Lord for a name; it is the fulfilment and full proclamation of the name of the Lord, proclaimed before Moses; I mean, that of the Lord's being gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, &c. &c. And, as this is to be to the Lord for a name of praise, so it is to be to the

Lord God for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. It is like the rainbow; that is a sign to God of the promise that he hath made to all men, that he will drown the world no more, and a sign to man that he shall not be drowned. But to us the former is a sign that God will no more be wroth with us nor rebuke us, and a sure sign to us that we never shall be drowned in destruction and perdition. The fir and the myrtle shall not be cut off; they never shall be cut asunder with the sword of justice, nor be separated from the communion and fellowship of God the Father, and God the Son: they shall ever abide in the favour of both. I think my dear sister is a good deal relapsed into legal bondage; she has lost the Lord's presence with respect to sensible enjoyment; and now she lives too near home, she creeps too much into self, and pores too much over the members and motions of the old man; and she has lived upon the old stock of past experiences so long that she has nothing left but the bare remembrance of them, and the hope which past experience hath wrought in her. Manna in the wilderness was to be gathered every day, except the Sabbath; and you know that hidden manna is promised to us under the gospel. Water from the rock followed Israel, and they drank of it: and we have the promise of being watered every moment, and of being kept night and day. When the land of Canaan was to rest on the seventh year, a blessing was promised on the sixth; and on the eighth year, when the new crop came in, some of the old store was to be found, that the householder might mix it with the new. And every scribe instructed unto the kingdom of God is to be like one of those old householders; he is to bring forth out of his treasures things new and old. But who are these stores for? The Lord tells you: "At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved!" Song vii. 13. The Passover offering was to be offered up but once in a year, in remembrance of Israel's great deliverance, and to lead their faith to their great Deliverer then to come, and to a greater deliverance by him; and we know

that Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us, and we are to keep the feast. But then there was to be a lamb offered every morning and evening throughout the year, which was called the daily sacrifice; and with which was to be offered a perpetual incense. This was to lead their faith to look daily to the Lamb of God, both for help and for life; and the sweet perfume of unctuous prayer and praise, under the influence of the spirit of supplication, must, as our incense, attend our daily looks to the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. We are to live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us.

At thy first deliverance thou hadst little else but banqueting for a whole year; then came weaning time; the breast was put up, and stronger meat was brought forth; the sincere milk of the word was left for other little ones, who are coming after, and for those who are unskilful in the word of righteousness; whilst knowledge and understanding are to feed them which are of full age. Ezekiel's roll and John's little book, were both to be eaten, and they were sweet in their mouth; but, when they came into the belly, and discovered all the innermost parts of that, attended with the candle of the Lord, it caused much bitterness there, through the risings of inbred corruptions against the heavenly contents. John's little book produced the wise man's twofold ingredients: "The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy." And this hath been the experience of all that ever received the word of God in power, in the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance. As for those who receive it into their head, and have their natural passions moved and stirred up under the sound of it, their joys seem long to abide; they are always the same; they have no changes of joy and bitterness, prosperity and adversity; they are not in trouble as other men, nor plagued as the people of God are; their strength is firm, until God's fan, or the midnight cry, comes on them; and then all their joys wither, like grass upon the house-top, "wherewith

the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheave his bosom." But God's choice of his people is made manifest to them in the furnace of affliction. When temptation and persecution began to fall heavy upon the apostles and primitive saints, when the sun waxed hot, and the fiery trial came on, the way-side hearers, the stony and thorny-ground hearers, those who went a warfare at their own cost, and those who began to build and were not able to finish; all went back and fell away. But God will bring his own elect through fire and through water: the former shall not kindle upon them, nor shall the latter drown them; in the furnace their election is made sure to them; "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will purify them, as silver is purified, and try them as gold is tried; they shall call upon my name, and I will hear them, and I will say, It is my people, and they shall say the Lord is my God." Here is God's acknowledgment of them; he is not ashamed to be called their God: and here is their warrantable and compulsive claim' upon him. By the faith of God's elect they shall say, The Lord is my God. And would my dear sister escape the furnace? Would she wish to carry all her dross and tin with her? Would she desire a whole heart that needs no physician? Doth not the Lord promise to look to, and dwell with, them that are of an humble and a contrite heart, and tremble at his word? to revive the heart of the humble, and the spirit of the contrite ones?

Come, old girl, thou hast been compassing the old mount, and poring over the old fretting leprosy long enough: look once more with Jonah, towards the holy temple. Jonah did more by looking than he did by kicking. Looking at the brazen serpent had better effect than looking at the bite, or complaining of the pain. Manoah and his wife did nothing but look on while the angel did wondrously before them: and this was all that the disciples did when the great work was finished. There was none to help, there was none to uphold. The disciples followed to see the end. Matt. xxvi. 58. And what did we do

when the great work was wrought in us? We looked to him, and were saved; we looked to him, and overcame him. And we must continue at this; we must not look at the things which are seen, for they discourage us, but at the things which are not seen. We must look at the eternal things that Christ is in full possession of for us; yea, we must run the race set before us, looking to the great possessor, the author and finisher of our faith.

If accused by Satan, law, or conscience, where can we look but to the Advocate? If exercised with God's chastening rod, or the reflections of fatherly anger, there is no where to look but to the great Mediator. If iniquities prevail against us, there is no hope but in the fountain opened by Christ, and in the fullness of grace treasured up in Christ. If sick, we must look to the great Physician; if our own heart condemn us, to the end of the law for righteousness; and, if weak, to the hope of his people, and to the strength of the children of Israel. Dost thou believe, my sister, that the whole body mystical, from the least to the greatest, is complete in the everlasting Father, Head, and Representative, of the church? Canst thou believe what the divine Bridegroom asserts, that those who are called to the fellowship of him are all fair, and that there is no spot in them? Dost thou believe, that when God laid our sins upon him, his righteousness became ours; that when he was apprehended, we were let go? that when he died we suffered the law in him, who is a part of ourselves? that we were crucified with Christ, and with his dead body we arose? that for our justification he left the tomb, and we were raised up, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: accepted in the beloved, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in him, and in him without fault before the throne? Hold fast then the Head, to which the whole body is knit and joined, and from which the divine unction descends which every joint supplieth. All the bands of love and peace which hold us together, and all the joints of union, friendship,

judgment, and affection, and all the confirmation and renewing of these, are of him and from him. This blessed Head ministers nourishment to the whole body, which body is bound up in the bundle of life, or in the bond of eternal love with the Lord our God.

The temptations and trials which have lately fallen to thy share are no other than such as are common to men. After I had been for a considerable time much indulged with the Lord's presence, and with such tender mercy and lovingkindness as is unspeakable, and with the fullest assurance of the reality of the work, and of my interest in his everlasting salvation, insomuch as not a fear, a scruple, or even the shadow of a doubt, remained about it, it pleased the Lord to try me sorely; not only with the loss of these heavenly visits, blessings, and never to be forgotten sensations, but all my corruptions appeared in all their infernal vigour. This sunk me; and peevishness, rebellion, and fretfulness, followed: then I went to striving against sin in my own strength; and this betrayed me into the shackles of legal bondage, till an army of unexpected terrors surrounded me, and the apparent anger of God, as I then supposed, pursued me on every side; and Satan, with his evil insinuations, suggested to me that all was a delusion; that God had done it to extort confessions of my own vileness and just deserts from my own mouth, that he might condemn me by them. And here I was almost ready to cast away all my confidence, despond, and get into madness. But the Lord fulfilled his promise again and again; for he revived the work, and was as sure to shine upon it, and bring it forth to the light again, as ever Satan and unbelief were to call it in question. And so wilt thou find it, and so thou hast often found it already. The sentence of justification passes through the court of conscience at once, and sensibly silences every accuser that the poor condemned sinner has. Upon this both law and justice, sin, Satan and conscience, let us go: and from that hour the tree of righteousness stand complete in the

Lord, having both righteousness and strength. This work is perfect, and is not by any inquisition to be brought into court in order to be sifted up and canvassed over again. This would reflect dishonour upon the omniscient and impartial Judge. No: but when God hides his face it is for the trial of our faith, and that by his going and coming he may familiarize himself to us, and the better known by us, and that we, may be led to distinguish between flesh and spirit. The adversary takes advantage of these our desertions, and confuses us, and casts us into a hasty spirit that he may confound and baffle our judgment; and when we are filled with confusion he spreads a dismal gloom over the mind, and obscures our evidences; and in our hurry the Spirit's witness is not attended to. But when the Lord comes he brings us forth to the light again, and we behold his righteousness. Then for our shame we receive double, and for confusion we rejoice in our portion; yea, in this world we possess double, and in the world to come everlasting joy shall be unto us, Isa. lxi. 7, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

I long to know the state of your corn, whether your lord and master hath waded through this unparalleled harvest. It hath fallen to our lot to be cast on the stage of this world when perilous times are come. For many months before this war broke out I had little before my eyes but calamitous tithes, and nothing but wars and rumours of wars followed my fears; and now, for these five months back, famine is continually in my view and little else upon my mind. Seed time and harvest, promised to all, seems this year to be denied to us. And I have long prophesied that the awful rebellion discovered in this hour of temptation would be followed by some external or internal judgment; by famine, pestilence, or something awful. But no judgment so fatal as an internal one; I mean that of being given up to blindness of mind, hardness of heart, and being left under the awful curse of God. Many of our impostors and hypocrites in profession have been so engaged

in political matters, and in the concerns of government, that they have neglected their lawful calling, and the concerns of their family, and have brought themselves to want bread. But it looks now as if they must fetch up their lost time by working over-hours, even to keep themselves from starving.

I know, by the word of the Lord, that oppression will be the crying sin throughout this world when the Saviour comes to take to himself his great power to reign. And this sin will extort more lamentable cries from the poor and needy than ever Pharaoh's cruelty did from the children of Israel; and a more conspicuous Deliverer will appear than ever Moses was. Read Psalm, lxxii. And, what is more astonishing, I have fainted in praying God to remove what I see to be coming on. I have no heart to pray against it, my faith fails; and, if I attempt it, it is against wind and tide, for the Spirit helps me not; nor will he ever make intercession for us contrary to the will of God. Therefore I take it for granted that it is appointed for us. Not long ago our oppressors contrived an artificial famine; and it seems now as if God would send a real one, that the oppressor may have an opportunity of filling up his measure; for sure I am that God will never forget that work.

At present I am but poorly, very weak inwardly; which makes me often look to the end of my race; for, look which way I may, I see nothing but causes of grief and sorrow; and yet the whole bulk of professors seem to sit still and be at rest. They see the whole country blessed with gospel ministers, and the work of the Lord going prosperously on every where; but I am so blind that I can see nothing of it, but quite the reverse; for, go where I will, I find here and there a poor perishing sinner starving for want of the bread of life, and there are none to break it unto them. In my view of things this is a time of spiritual famine, when many of the poor and needy seek water, and there is none. Wells without water, and clouds without rain, we have plenty; but the ministry of the Spirit, and

the power of God unto salvation, is rarely to be found. But we must leave the government upon the shoulders of the wonderful Counsellor; for none of the subjects of his kingdom shall ever perish, but shall have eternal life. I have run quite out of the way; but it is out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Our glass is running out apace, and the bitterness of death is past; life and immortality hath been brought to light in our souls; the incarnate Word hath quickened us; he hath chastened us sore, but he hath not given us over unto death. Then "wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?" Out of the dark regions of the shadow of death have we been brought: our sins have been removed, and our guilt purged; he hath begotten us to a lively hope, and blessed us with inward peace; he hath circumcised our hearts to love him, and will not suffer any thing to satisfy us short of his presence, his grace, and the light of his countenance; and, though these be often denied us, yet the time cometh when we shall see him as he is; and our present sorrows and sufferings shall be all forgotten; when we shall hear no more the groanings of Zion, nor shall her children say any more, "Behold, I am sick;" for all the remains of corruption shall be done away. Farewell, dear sister, and let me know by a few lines, as soon as you are able to write, what support, what relief, what encouragement, what views, prospects, meditations, smiles, or visits, you have been favoured with in this last furnace: and you will much oblige

Your affectionate friend and brother,

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita.

Letter XXXIX.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

I saw received yours, and do most kindly thank you for the same. I was sorry to hear of your inward weakness; should be glad to know if it hath pleased the Lord to re-establish your health.

Some things in your Letter convinced me that you still remain a prophet of the Lord to me; for you have described my feelings as true as if you had known all the workings of my mind for this fortnight past; though I know you could not have received my last little scrap of a Letter till after yours was written.

Relapsed into legal bondage I am. O! it is a wretched captivity. You tell me to look once more towards God's holy temple. But, alas! I have no faith in exercise on the object of faith, nor yet on the promise. I feel the old man alive in all his members. Never, I think, did I experience such a frame since I descended from the mount. God has put me into his furnace, and has supported me there hitherto; though at times I fear his rod has been spent on me in vain. I am shut up from the public means, where my soul has been often quickened under the word, through indisposition of body, for my tabernacle is kept very weak and low. Satan preaches me many lectures, and tries to raise in my mind hard thoughts of my God; and he too often succeeds. It is poor living on the old stock; indeed, it only keeps hope from giving up the ghost; it is living too near home, as you 157a well observe, O! how does my soul long to have this veil rent. But I know that nothing will do it but a sight of Christ crucified. O! that he would work in my heart that contrition and godly sorrow, that with Mary I might sit at his dear feet and weep it out. My soul craves no greater blessing

in this world. But the Lord has, I believe, some harder lessons to teach me; and I am slow of heart to learn, as well as to believe. I want to distinguish the voice of God in his rod, which you so sweetly treat of in your Letter. But I am brought into darkness, and not into light, so that I cannot discern; therefore I need stroke upon stroke. My cry is, with Job, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." I well know where the cause lies; it is that folly that is bound up in my heart; and there is so much of it in me that I fear there can be little else but the rod assigned for me. God grant I may be helped to bow and submit to his will. I know the rod is in the covenant; and I do believe that what I am called to endure is not vindictive wrath, but fatherly chastisement, intended for my good. But it is hard to bear; and the mind and thoughts will find employment; and it is, as you observe, poring over the old man and his workings; and I think sometimes that this gives Satan an advantage against me. But I cannot do the things that I would: "but the evil which I would not, that I do." How very unlike the myrtle you speak of am I, whose sap is, as you observe, always up, and whose leaf is ever green. But sure I am, and that from bitter experience, that there is not one grace of the Spirit will flourish in my heart when the beloved of my soul withdraws and hides himself from me. I often look over some of your former Letters, which I received when in the midst of my joys, where you warned me of such days of darkness and desertion coming on me, by telling me that the days would come that I should desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, but I should not see it. But I would not believe it. I could not entertain a thought that I should ever fall into legal bondage again. But, alas! it has fallen to my share over and over again. Therefore, as Jesus said to one that came to him, I was to go and learn what that meaneth. And sure I am, as you well observe, that Satan can bring a dismal gloom on the mind. His aim with me lately is to bring my mind into darkness, by perplexing me with some part of the word of God; by endeavouring to make one part clash with another. I

have something at present which much puzzles me, and has for these two months past; and I do suspect he has a hand in it. But, as you have kindly invited me to use freedom, I would beg your thoughts on the passage where Abraham was commanded by God to offer up his son; and, after the angel had forbidden it, it is said that he looked and beheld a ram caught in a thicket by his horns, and he took and offered it up instead of his son. But the mystery which I want light upon is this, how this ram can be a type of Christ as the sinner's surety. And yet it must be, because God accepted it as Isaac. Now, though Christ was God, yet he never suffered in his divine nature. Yet the blood of a ram, when slain, is expressly said, in Exodus, to be the blood of sprinkling; and in Numbers, it is said to be the atonement. Nor can I understand how the Passover lamb was a type of Christ; because he is, in the New Testament, said to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. When first it was brought to my mind I saw it a mystery, but did not think my being enlightened into it was any thing essential. But, as it dwelt on my mind, it led me on to the mystery of the Trinity, which I know I am very dark about; and I began to tremble, fearing I should be left to fall into some error respecting that great mystery, and so be left to stumble on the dark mountains; and, from the time my mind was oppressed with it, the dear Redeemer of my soul has been more and more obscured from my sight. I should have mentioned it to you when I was last with you, but I thought it better to make it part of the subject of Letter; then I should, perhaps, have your answer to refer to at any time, which I have often found a second and third benefit from. I hope the Lord will give you something by which my mind may be relieved from its present perplexity. The latter part of your Letter caused me some faintings of heart. It is a sad sign to a nation when God stops the breath of prayer, in his servants, for adverting the judgments which they foresee coming on. Those must be bad days when God will not suffer his servants to stand in the gap. However, the word is gone out of his

mouth that it shall be well with the righteous. I hope we shall not have a famine of the word, and then it shall be well with our souls, however we may be called to suffer in our bodies. I have tried to persuade H T to give you a few lines respecting what you wish to know; but I do not know whether I shall prevail or not. I fear your patience will be tired out in reading this Letter of complaints. Can only add, I remain

Yours in the best of bonds,

In the King's prison.

Philomela.

Letter XL.

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

I RECEIVED thine epistle safe, and, by the contents of it, I perceive that thou hast finished thy song in the night. The melody of thy harp is exchanged for mourning, and thine organ to the voice of them that weep. Nevertheless, I shall not change thy name, for thou must and shalt sing again: "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord." This the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. Thou must, my sister, come in the good old way, the four first stages of which have long been pointed out. Noah's ark was to be made with first, second, and third stories; but the dove, when she returned, rested on the top till Noah put forth his hand and took her in to him. This ark appears to me to be more a type of the church than of Christ, for the church is seldom without unclean as well as clean; but no unclean creature, strictly speaking, can be experimentally in him, much less shut in by him, till the storms of wrath be past.

The temple of the Lord hath an outer court, called the court of the Gentiles; the next was the court where the worshipping Israelites assembled; the next was the sanctuary, where the priests performed their service; the next was the most holy place, accessible to none but God and his high-priest; and he must go through the court of the Gentiles, then through the court of the Israelites, then through the sanctuary and into the holy place. So Noah went from the earth to the lower story, then to the second, then to the third, and lastly he removed the covering of the ark, and looked out at the top. We must come, according to Peter, out of this world. This causes many to think it strange that we run not to the same excess of riot. Then come convictions of sin and sore temptations: "Though now, if need be, ye are in heaviness, through manifold

temptations." Then come better days: "Whom, having not seen, ye love; and though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." But, when these joys are withdrawn, it appears as if some strange thing had happened unto us. This fiery trial is to try our faith, that it may appear more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, and shall be found unto praise, an, I honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, when the Lord will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant:" and "Come, ye blessed of my Father, enter the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." When this trial is over, thou wilt find thy feet standing in a more even place. So says Peter, "After that ye have suffered a while, the Lord make you perfect, strengthen, stablish, settle you." Keep these stages in view. There is, and must be, a coming out of the world; and, when this is done, there is a watching at Wisdom's gate, which answers to the court of the Gentiles; and, even when kind invitations come, suitable to our case, we must not ascend; "When thou art bidden to a wedding," says Christ, "sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden." We must imitate the Saviour. He first appeared in the form of a servant; and, when the law comes home to us, our baseness as bond-servants appears; bound under sin, Satan, death, and the law, we are. This sets us sensibly down in the dark regions of the shadow of death, and in the strong holds of sin and Satan. Here Christ shines first upon us: in this our low estate he remembers us, and says unto us, "Friends, go up higher." The next stage brings us to his feet: they shall sit down at his feet; "Every one shall receive of thy words." Now he appears pacified towards us, and we remember our own evil way, which was not good, and loathe ourselves in our own sight for our iniquities. But he dwells with the humble and the contrite, to revive the spirit of the humble, and the heart of the contrite ones. Now he puts us forth into the joy of the Lord. This encourages us to freedom and sweet familiarity, to communion and fellowship.

And here our mountain seems to stand strong, and we are ready to think that we shall never be moved. I know of but one stage higher than this that ever I arrived at. This stage brings Christ nigh, as evidently set forth crucified among us; and we look at, admire, and wonder at him. This is the Lord manifesting himself to us, and dwelling in us. But after this he leads our thoughts higher; for, after we have looked at him, mourned over his sufferings, and been stung with hatred to self and sin on the account of them, he raises us up with another appearance of himself, and that is as risen from the dead, crying out, "All hail!" This raises us up to his glorification, and we rise to a lively hope of his resurrection from the dead. This comforts our souls, that his sufferings are over, and that death hath no more dominion over him. And now our hope is admitted within the veil, we rise to newness of life under the influence of the Spirit of love and joy; and not only are our affections admitted to God's right hand, where he sitteth, but we are made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is the highest stage in the divine life. The highest receptacle in the temple from the ground-floor was the galleries, Ezek. xli. 15, and xlii. 3 Into these, if I mistake not, the Jewish women were admitted. This is dwelling on high, and seeing the King in his beauty; whereas, when he is exhibited to us upon the cross, he looks in his sufferings like a sacrifice, or as one made sin for us, and as numbered with the transgressors, but by no means as a king. It was as glorified, enthroned, and crowned with glory and honour, that he appeared to Ezekiel, Daniel, and John. And in this appearance the holy spouse saw him: "The hair of thy head is like purple: the King is held in the galleries," Song vii. 5. Purple is a royal colour, and in his royalty she saw him; and, though she had often had a glimpse of him as leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills, standing behind the wall, looking in at the window, and showing himself through the lattice, and oftentimes had felt the finger of his power making her bowels to move, and had felt his name as

an ointment poured forth, and at times caught hold of him, yet she could not retain him, as she owns, "My beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; my soul failed when he spake," &c. &c. But at last he tells her to turn away her eyes from him, for she had overcome him: then she says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." And he certainly is held or bound in the galleries; for by heavenly-minded souls, who have enjoyed him, and who never can rest without him, nor find any satisfaction in any thing short of him, he is held, and to such he is bound, in the bond of everlasting love, and that by his own promise, and by his own act and deed: "I will betroth thee unto me in judgment; I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, in loving-kindness, in faithfulness, and for ever; and thou shalt know the Lord." And, as he is thus bound to a wife, he will never seek to be loosed. John, in his Revelation, saw him in Isis priestly garments among the candlesticks, and as king upon his white horse; but as glorified in both. This wonderful appearance so astonished John that he fell to the ground; but it was intended to raise John's conceptions higher than before; for, though he had known Christ after the flesh, yet from that time forward he knew him so no more.

I have been much of late meditating on what Paul calls the new man in us. Jeremiah says, "Thy word was found, and I ate it, and it was the joy and rejoicing of my heart." John and Ezekiel ate the roll and the little book, and declared that they were sweet as honey; but what that mouth is, which feeds so sweetly on the promises and on the Passover lamb, is hard to describe. "A feast of fat things, of marrow and fatness, and of wines on the lees well refined," it certainly is. We have an altar to eat at, and certain it is that the new man has got his mouth which feeds upon spiritual provision, digests it, and receives nourishment and satisfaction from it: but this mouth remains a mystery to me. The new man has got his nose, but I cannot tell what it is. All Christ's garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and

cassia, out of the ivory palaces; and God doth make manifest the savour of the knowledge of Christ among his people. This we know; and, on the other hand, if one come into our company whose scent remains in him, whose scent is not changed, who is settled on his old lees, what a stinking savour do such little foxes send forth! But who can describe that nose that so sensibly distinguishes between the odour of Christ's garments and the stench of the foxes, and the stinking savour of dead flies? Nor is the new man without his ears. What is spoken to the outward ears hath no effect, if it goes no further: "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak friendly to her heart," Hosea, ii. 14. Hence it is said of Christ, that, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street," Isa. xlii. 2. And yet many will say in the last day, "We have eaten in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." They heard the voice of the man; but it is only the dead, or self-condemned, that hear the voice of the Son of God and live: "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice," John, xviii. 37. And all his sheep hear his voice, and follow and distinguish his voice from all others; and Christ hath dropped his benediction both upon such ears and eyes: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." And I know that he hath often spoke to my inmost soul, and I heard the voice, felt it, and understood it; but my outward ears had nothing to do with it. But what those ears are that hear so plainly when he speaks friendly to the heart, I cannot describe. The eyes of the new man are as wonderful: "The world sees me no more," says Christ, "but ye see me; and because I live ye shall live also." And again: "I will send the Comforter to you, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Moses saw him that is invisible; the patriarchs saw the promise at a distance: "A wise man foresees the evil, and hides himself;" and the saint, in his first love, sees "the King in his beauty, and the land which is very far off." And I have seen my dear Master in

open vision for many months together. But what these eyes are is a mystery. Paul says these things are spiritually discerned; and he tells us that the eyes of our understanding are opened; but he doth not explain what those eyes are. I know that faith discovers wonders. But the soul hath more eyes than one. What are the eyes of the understanding? The new man hath got his affections also, which are peculiar to him, the objects of which are, first, God, and his word, and his saints. These affections, love, or charity, are the principal parts of the new man; and, when in exercise, they fill the soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Nor is the new man without his hands. There is a something that holds the beloved fast, and will not let him go. These hands hold fast the faithful word, and every thing that Christ hath given us, that no man take our crown. These hands appear to be the powerful actings of faith, which, under the Spirit's influence and operations, are very powerful. I have often been thinking of the feet of the new man, by which we go in and out, and find pasture; yea, God says "They shall mount up as upon eagle's wings, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." I know believing is called a coming to God, and we are said to walk by faith and not by sight; but I think love must have her part in these wonderful journeys of the soul; for faith can neither work nor walk but by love.

Thus I have sent my dear sister a few of my secret thoughts upon these things. But, as Milton says,

"I find no end, in wondering mazes lost;"
and yet there is a secret pleasure in soaring and diving,
though I can neither reach the top nor fathom the bottom.

Whatever name the Lord's elect are called by, the Saviour is generally set forth or represented by something suitable to it. They are debtor, and he the surety; subjects, and he the king; children, and he the father; lion's whelps, and he the lion;

lambs, &c. and he was represented by the ram. A lamb slain from the foundation of the world he is, and that in a two-fold sense: first, in the purpose of God; and, in the next place, he was typically slain by Abel's sacrifice. It is true, he did not suffer in his divine nature; he was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit;" he suffered in the flesh, and bore our sins in his own body upon the tree. Yet, you have no call to wonder at his being typified both by the ram and the lamb, when the scriptures often set him forth both in his seniority and in his youth. In the book of Daniel, where he is represented as the judge of quick and dead, the hair of his head is said to be as white as the pure wool; and he is the Ancient of Days; but in the Song of Solomon, where he is described as a wooer, his locks are said to be bushy, and black as a raven.

The best knowledge, and the safest that thou wilt ever attain to respecting the Trinity, in this world, is, a knowledge of God the Father's love shed abroad in the heart. This says, "Yea, I have loved thee, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." The next is the voice of the blood of sprinkling, which speaks pardon, peace, and reconciliation, which are better things than the blood of Abel. The third is the Spirit's voice, crying, Abba, Father. These are the witnesses of the Trinity; and these three agree one. The Lord for ever bless thee.

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita

Letter XLI.

To Noctua Aurita, in the Desert.

I EMBRACE this opportunity of sending you a few lines to inform you a little how I go on. When I wrote to you last my soul was melted within me because of trouble; I was fainting in the day of adversity, for my soul was much discouraged because of the way. But the Lord, who comforteth those that are cast down, and who is ever a refuge for the poor and needy, has condescended to appear for me, to raise my hope and expectation, being once more brought to enjoy the presence of him who is all in all to my soul. And I think I do now know something of what the apostle calls rejoicing in hope; and this hope I find to be an anchor to my soul, for it does enter into that within the veil. The tempest with which I was tossed has ceased its raging, and a blessed calm is brought to my mind. I am sure Satan himself has felt it; he could not endure it; and unbelief was put to the blush, while faith laid fast hold of his word of promise which was spoken to my soul. How true are the words of the wise man when he says, "As cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." How a word from God does melt and humble us, and bring us to his feet! And I am sure that nothing else will do it; though in seasons of desertion Satan is as busy with me as ever he can be with any poor soul. to stir up in me hard thoughts of my kind and gracious God and Redeemer. But I find that e2d afterwards these things make deep furrows in my soul, when contrition of heart and godly sorrow operate under the influence of the blessed Spirit. I think I never did before see the distinction so clear between the old man and the new, or what Paul calls flesh and spirit, as I do now. This knowledge I have got in my last conflict, and by experience, which has been truly bitter to my soul; therefore I hope it will

abide. My mind seems at present much impressed with a sense of the goodness and loving-kindness of the Lord to me. I believe he will not let me run away from him, because, when I am bent on going on in ways that are not good, he lays his rod on me to stop me. How oft has he called back my wandering feet! I may well say, Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all my days to this present moment; though Satan has often stirred up such rebellion in my heart that I have even called God's ministers liar, when they have prophesied good concerning me. But, notwithstanding this, the Lord has put in my heart some good thing, which will not find satisfaction in anything short of his blessed presence; and, as this is his sweet work, he will accept it. I was long looking for some good thing in myself to recommend me to his favour, instead of receiving all good from him. And, indeed, I find this, that when he withdraws from me, with respect to his sensible presence, once, and leaves me in the dark, so that I cannot see one step of the path, that then the old legal leaven in my tabernacle will work and ferment to set me to struggle and strive in my own strength. But when God has appeared for me after such a season, how has my folly been manifested, and I have called myself a thousand fools and have seen clearly that if, instead of striving and struggling, I had continued to have entreated the Lord to help and deliver me, I should have been brought out of my difficulties and darkness much sooner. I am sure, from my own experience, that if God was not to give us something to keep hope and expectation alive, they would soon give up the ghost in such seasons of darkness. But, blessed be his name, he will never forsake his own work. I was sorry to hear you was poorly with a cold. I shall be glad to hear you are better; and I need not say a Letter will be very acceptable. You, know that I am better in my poor tabernacle than when I wrote last; I think I do begin to see that this late affliction is among the all things that shall work together for my good. I know the Lord has taught me something by it, and supported me through it, and did keep me when Satan, that

old serpent, and his accursed crew, did compass me about like bees, when I was in such a situation that I could neither cry nor call on my God for help. He did then go to the utmost length of his chain, and would, I have no doubt, if he had been permitted, have torn me to pieces, soul and body. What God is like unto our God? O that I could be assured that I should never more entertain one hard thought of him respecting any of his dispensations towards me! But I must conclude, which I do with wishing you prosperity both of soul and body, with much of his presence who is the health of both: and believe me to remain

Your affectionate friend and sister in the Lord,

The King's Dale

Philomela.

Letter XLII.

To Philomela, in the King's Dale

THINE epistle afforded me much joy. "Blessed are they that endure temptations, for when they are tried they shall receive the crown of life," which he hath promised to them that love him. Thou didst say, O thou of little faith! "I shall not see him;" yet judgment was before him, and he hath brought thee forth to the light, and thou hast beheld his righteousness. How sweet and endearing are his visits after his long absence! How welcome are his returns after our souls have sat solitary, as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, as a wife of youth refused and deserted! But he soon makes us forget the shame of our youth, and the reproach of our widowhood; and the adversary that saluteth us with a "Where is now thy God?" sees it and vanishes, inflamed with rage. But he only departs for a season. Nevertheless, the armour of God is sufficient to repel the force of all his artillery. God hath planted his fear in our hearts that we may not depart from him. He hath renewed, enlightened, instructed, and influenced our consciences by his Spirit, that he may check and reproach us for all that is wrong, and approve of all that is right; and we must exercise ourselves day and night not to offend him. We are favoured with the witness, seal, and first-fruits of the Spirit, and are commanded not to vex or grieve him. lest he suspend his freedom, his consolations, and his much-needed assistance, in prayer. The Redeemer has left us also his last legacy, I mean peace: and we have the promise of the enjoyment of it, unless we make to ourselves crooked paths. We have the promise of his presence, and of the light of his countenance likewise, unless our sins hide his face from us, or cause him to return to his place, till we acknowledge our offences, and seek him early. We have also that faith that is of

the operation of the Spirit of God; and nothing can unsettle, weaken, damp, or deaden the vigorous actings of faith like our misconduct. Besides these things, we have the helmet of hope, the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit, and all sorts of prayer; and these things are more mighty bulwarks against Satan than all the fears of death and wrath, yea, than all the horrors, terrors, threatenings, and curses, of a broken law, which the disciples of Moses pride themselves so much upon. Let my dear sister pay due attention to these things which accompany salvation, and she shall have rejoicing in herself alone, and not in another, and shall praise her God with joyful lips. Moreover, as God hath restored he, again to the joys of his salvation, let me admonish her not to act the part of a hawking pedlar, lest they get weary of her; but let her entertain her beloved with praises and thanksgivings, as he entertains her with the discoveries of his love. My kind love to the good man of the house, and tell him I have remembrance of him in my poor prayers. Excuse haste, as I am a servant to many. Dear sister, adieu.

Ever thine in the brotherly covenant,

The Desert.

Noctua Aurita

The Breath of the Lord, and the Sieve of Vanity

William Huntington (1745-1813)

"And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err," Isaiah 30:28.

THIS prophet, in the preceding verses, is predicting Jerusalem's destruction, and the abundance of God's grace and spirit upon the little hills of Zion, both among the believing Jews and Gentiles, at that time, verse 25. He next prophesies of the super-abounding light which, in gospel days, should exceed that of the former dispensation; that if the church of God was called the "moon" then, it should now be called the "sun;" and that, if there were children of the day in that state, the light should be as the light of seven days in this, verse 26. He then proceeds to Christ, calling him "the name of the Lord," in allusion to God's charge to Moses, "Offend him not, for my name is in him;" and because the name of the Lord, proclaimed before Moses, "The Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and in truth, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin," was now, in a most wonderful manner, to be verified, to be made known, and to be experienced and enjoyed by all the elect of God. But, as this name of the Lord was sadly provoked for forty years together by the unbelieving Jews in the wilderness, so it would be provoked again by those who refuse to hear his voice, and harden their hearts against him, as in the provocation, when their fathers tempted him, proved him, and

saw his works forty years. And so likewise it would be with the unbelieving Gentiles, against whom, as well as against the Jews, he would come burning with anger; and those who set themselves against him should find and feel the burden of his indignation; for his word as a fire shall kindle in them, and at last destroy them; and my text informs you how. "And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err."

In this work I will endeavour to give you my thoughts in the following order:

1. What I understand by the Lord's" breath."
2. Why compared to a "stream."
3. The" neck" which this stream reaches to.
4. The "sieve of vanity" used among the nations; and,
5. The "bridle in the jaws of sinners, which shall make them to err."

The first account that we have of the breath of the Lord is in Gen. ii. 7. "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." A living soul was infused into Adam's body, which animated it, actuated it, influenced it, and possessed it; and man was pronounced good; for God made man upright, yea in the image of God created he him. But, alas! Adam sinned, and all that was good left him, and evil found him: life left him, and the sentence of death entered into him: "Sin entered, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all, for 'all have sinned.'" But God promises to the house of Israel that he will breathe upon them once more. "Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live; for I will put my spirit into you, and ye shall

live; and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it." The New Testament will inform us of the going forth of this breath of the Lord among the nations. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And, when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained," John, xx. 22, 23. This is the going forth of the breath of the Lord into the nations; for they were to go into all nations, and to preach the gospel to every creature; and the Spirit of the Lord was to speak in them, and these effects were to follow some men's sins were to be remitted, and the sins of others were to be retained; those that believe are to be saved, and those that believe not are to be damned. Hence the servants of the Lord are a sweet savour of God in them that are saved, and in them that perish; for Christ by his Spirit speaks in his servants; and hence it is said that "with the rod of his mouth he smites the earth" (and heals it again)," and with the breath of his lips he slays the wicked:" and these things are done by the words which are in the mouth of every minister of the Spirit; "and thus life and death are in the power of the tongue:" for some are quickened by the Spirit, and others are left twice dead, plucked up by the roots. I come now to treat of the "stream" to which the Lord's breath is compared.

The Holy Spirit's well-known emblems are those of breath, wind, fire, and water; two of which are mentioned in my text; the last of which is that of an overflowing "stream," which carries all before it; for he fits, qualifies, and sends the preacher; directs him where to go, and where not; and furnishes him with matter and manner; and always works with and by the word. Some souls he enters into, and abides with; and "they are saved by the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost:" while those who resist him, and oppose themselves to him, and endeavour to counteract his work, and ridicule and abuse his power, influence, and

operations, he leaves dried, blasted, and withered, under the rebukes and reproofs of heaven, which kindle in them, as fit fuel for everlasting burnings. "Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it," Isa. xxx. 33. Under the wrath and curse of God the gospel finds such sinners, and under the same it leaves them; when hardness of heart desperate wickedness, or a fearful looking-for of judgment, is sure to follow, to find out, and, sooner or later, to consume these adversaries. This stream reaches to the midst of the "neck," which is what I come next to describe.

The "neck" is that part of the human body which unites the head and the body together; and to this the scriptures often allude; for instance, Christ is called the "head," as he is the head of influence, from whom all grace flows; and the "covenant head," who represents the whole church; and the church is his body. "Now ye are the body of Christ," saith Paul, "and members in particular:" and again, "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." But, then, what can the neck be, that unites this glorious head to this mystical body? I think this neck must be the covenant of grace; for God the Father first chose that human nature, which the Word was to assume, from everlasting, and then chose us in him, gave us to him, and made us one with him: and he fixed his eternal love upon us in him before the world was made. By the tenor of this covenant elected sinners were espoused to Christ from everlasting, and are openly betrothed to him in time. "I will betroth thee to me in righteousness, in mercies, and in loving kindness; yea, I will betroth thee to me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." Thus this secret betrothing to Christ in eternity terminates in openly espousing us to him in time by the gospel, as Paul speaks; "I have espoused you unto a good husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin unto Christ." Hence it appears that, by the

covenant of grace, we were made one with Christ in eternity; but then, where is that which unites us to him in time? Nothing can do this but love, because we are enemies; and enmity separates between the Lord and us. God reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has sent the word of reconciliation to us; and we are entreated by his servants to be reconciled to him. But, as the carnal mind is enmity against him; nothing but his love revealed, made known, and shed abroad in the heart, can remove our enmity: this will make us friends; and this, and only this, can unite us to him; for "love is the bond of all perfectness;" and this is the bond that "binds the soul up in the bundle of life with the Lord our God:" and this love, winning and drawing all our love to him, is the "neck" that unites the covenant head and his body mystical together: and where this is wanting there can be no union; for "he that loveth father or mother better than me is not worthy of me."

Many high encomiums are put upon this neck or the holy spouse. "Thy neck is comely with chains of gold," Song i. 10. The neck is mutual love between Christ and his bride; the chains are the promises of the gospel, the apples of gold in pictures of silver: for, in plain English, all that do not receive the love of the truth, and the truth in the love of it, are given up to believe a lie; for God shall send to them strong delusions.

Again, "Thy neck is like the tower of David, builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men," Song iv. 14. This intimates that the many infernal and human attacks that are made at the church, to separate her from her heavenly head and husband, are all in vain; though, to accomplish this, hath ever been, and ever will be, the schemes, plots, and unholy war, both of devils and reprobates: but, in covenant, God and his truth are both our shield and buckler.

Again, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse: thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck," Song iv. 9. Love is the neck; and this chain, or the spouse's necklace, is the doctrines of the gospel, which, like a chain, hang all together, and depend one on another; in which there is a wonderful harmony, every link bearing its part: and without every link be kept in its proper place, the whole chain is weakened, entangled, and confused, and appears so to every poor, weak believer, both in the scriptures, in the judgment, and in the experience, of the poor soul; and so they feel it to their sorrow, whose minds have been unsettled, their judgments bewildered, and their affections excluded for a while from the Lord Jesus, by the instrumentality of damnable heretics, who have seduced them from Christ, that they might affect them.

Solomon, in his dark sayings, gives his pupils many instructions about the neck. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; for they shall be an ornament of grace to thine head, and chains about thy neck." The instruction of our father is the tuition of Christ, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace: the law of Sarah, who is the mother of us all, is the law of faith: the best ornament of grace to the head is "God the health of our countenance;" and the best chain to the neck is truth in the love of it.

Again, "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart," Prov. iii. 3. Mercy, grace, and truth came by Jesus Christ; and Solomon's counsel is to bind them about our neck; for, if the hearing of these things bring about no union between Christ and the soul, what doth it profit? just nothing: and, if they are not written on the tables of the heart, the new covenant is not revealed to the soul; for to write the laws of God on the heart and mind, and to remove sin from us, and to remember it no more, is the better covenant: and where this is not done, there

can be no experience of this deliverance from sin; and where there is no experience of pardon, there can be no hope of the glory of God in heaven; for it is experience that worketh hope. Thus Christ is the head; and all the elect, Jews and Gentiles, are the body. God in covenant made them one in eternity; and when covenant love is made known to them, they become one spirit in time: love, as the neck, unites them; and, by virtue of this union, the body is influenced by the head, and made fruitful, as a branch is in the vine, or as a wife is to her husband: and the great truths of the gospel are the church's ornamental necklace. But, after all, this is not the neck mentioned in my text.

There is another head, besides Christ. Satan bears this name: "The woman's seed shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This work was done in a figure at Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, for Pharaoh was a type of the devil. "Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation even to the neck," Hab. iii. 13. When God poured on the Egyptians the fierceness of his wrath, he sent evil angels among them; and these influenced Pharaoh, and all his mighty warriors, to pursue Israel; and, when God overthrew them in the Red Sea, he is said to break "the heads of the dragons in the waters," Psalm lxxlv. 13. It is this head that influences and leads on the whole host of persecutors against Christ. "But he shall wound the head of his enemies," Psalm lxviii. 21. And this work he did effectually when he triumphed over principalities and powers upon the cross; and the blessed effects of this hath been, still is, and will be, seen and known, all the world over, in future times, "when he shall wound the heads over many countries."

This head has got a body, in which he reigns and rules; and these are the children of disobedience: and there is a sad covenant betwixt them, called "a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell," Isai. xxviii. 18; the bond of which is "the

bond of iniquity," which bond is love to sin, and hatred to God. This is the neck mentioned in my text, which keeps the devil and his children together; and, as sure as "he that is joined to a harlot is one body," I Cor. vi. 16, so sure those "that go a whoring after devils," Levit. xvii. 7, are one spirit with him. The Holy Ghost runs the parallel betwixt these two heads and bodies. We read of the head Christ, and the head Satan; of a covenant with Christ, and of a covenant with hell; of the church of Christ, and of the synagogue of Satan; of the bond of all perfectness, and of the bond of iniquity; of love to God, and of love to sin; of espousals to Christ, and of whoring with devils; of the mystery of godliness, and the mystery of iniquity; the doctrines of God, and the doctrines of the devils; of Christ the everlasting Father, and of a people who are of their father the devil; of the children of God, and children of the devil; of the cup of the Lord, and the cup of the devils; the table of the Lord, and the table of the devils; of fellowship with the Lord, and of fellowship with devils; of Christ in the heart by faith, and of Satan in the hearts of the disobedient; and, as sure as the love of God in the heart, and a hatred to sin, is the church's neck, that unites her to Christ, so sure love to sin, and hatred to God, is the neck that holds Satan and his whore together; and so it will appear in the great day.

But "the breath of the Lord, like an overflowing stream, reaches to the midst of this neck," and breaks this bond of iniquity, "and hedges up the sinner's way with thorns;" so that, if he pursues after his lovers, he cannot overtake them; the arrows of wrath, the bucklers of justice, and the stings of guilt, pierce him, insomuch that he cannot get on in the old track. "The yoke of his transgressions shall be destroyed, because of the anointing." His agreement with death shall be disannulled, and his covenant with hell shall not stand; for Christ will have a portion with the great, and he will divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death, in order to redeem this portion; and therefore he

will spoil the house of the strong man armed. It was this breath of the Lord, reaching the heart, and conveying Christ's everlasting love into it, that brought about an eternal separation between Mary Magdalene and her seven devils. This neck, this love to sin, which is the bond of iniquity, is the grand cement which holds all idolaters, all workmongers, or self admirers, which are idolaters, and all the mystical Babel builders to their sandy foundation; as was the case with Paul, till God discovered it. "Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation to the neck. Selah." Hab. iii. 13. Take notice of that.

When this foundation is discovered, and this neck made bare, it inflicts a wound in the infernal head; it lays open his policy, and crushes his power; it alarms the poor secure mortal, and makes him feel his bonds; and he groans under them, and calls for deliverance; and God, in answer to his cry, opens the prison doors to him that is bound.

I now proceed to describe the "sieve of vanity." This sieve is not the gospel; it is not the ministration of the Spirit, which God ordained for our glory; this is not a vain thing, or vanity; though some men that perish have called it foolishness, when compared to Grecian wisdom: yet the gospel is not a light, trifling, empty thing; for it treats of the most weighty, powerful, solid, and momentous things, that ever were heard of beneath the sun; such as redemption, salvation, the grace of God, and everlasting glory. Besides, the gospel is distinguished from this sieve in the text itself. The gospel is called "the breath of the Lord;" but this sieve is "the sieve of vanity." Whatever it is, it seems to be something which is intended to shake, to winnow, to try, and to exercise, in order to prove what is good grain and what is not; and so to separate the one from the other, or the vile from the precious: and therefore, under the all-wise conduct of God, it is among the all things that work for good to them that love God; and so it is written, "For lo, I will

command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth," Amos, ix. 9. It is well known that God's professing church is called a floor, and his children are called corn. "O my threshing, and the corn of my floor; that which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you," Isai. xxi. 10. This sieve of vanity appears to be the temptations of Satan: he is the drudge, or slave, that God makes use of to do this black and dusty work in his floor; and the malicious mind of this evil spirit prompts him to be very fond of it. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," Luke, xxii. 31, 32. In the above passage several useful lessons of instruction may be learnt to our comfort: the first is, the bent of the devil's mind to mischief, and to torment those that he cannot destroy. "Satan hath desired to have you;" take notice of that; "he hath desired," &c.; he hath for some time been desirous of having thee; but I have not suffered him hitherto, whatever I may do. Hence we learn that this poor scavenger cannot perform his enterprise without leave from the Lord of the harvest: it is not what the devil desires, but it is what the Lord determines, that shall be done. We may perceive that the devil wished to go through stitch with this business: he did not want to sift Peter like barley, or lentils; nor like vetches, which require but a little winnowing; but like wheat, which must go into the sieve again and again. But can we suppose that Satan has such an aversion to chaff, that he is so desirous of sifting poor Peter, that he might make him as pure as wheat? No, no. Dust is Satan's meat, and chaff is Satan's fuel; and it is the only part or lot that falls to his share in all the floor. What the devil wished to blow out of Peter's heart was the grace of God, and especially the grace of faith: against this the devil shook his riddle with all his might; and in behalf of this the Lord bent his whole prayer, "I have prayed for thee, that thy

faith fail not." And thus the Lord's end, and Satan's aim, widely differ: the Lord intended to purge Peter from confidence in the flesh, and the devil to winnow him out of all confidence in the Lord: the Lord intended to make Peter more useful by it, and Satan to make him both fruitless and useless. "When thou art converted" (from thy self-confidence, and art made sensible of thine own weakness, and of my strength made perfect in it) "then strengthen thy brethren;" strengthen their faith in me, Simon, that they may be strong in the grace that is in me, and not in their own frames, however lively, or however joyful.

"Though all men be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended," saith poor Simon. Those great words called aloud for this "sieve of vanity;" and poor Peter soon found himself in it: and the devil gave his riddle such a shake, as moved and stirred up every corruption of his heart; enmity, carnal fear, cowardice, shame, rebellion, infidelity, anger; and so filled his heart with blasphemy, that the very oaths and curses ran out of his mouth. But the Holy Spirit will ever glorify Christ, and will testify of him; so that he would not leave Peter; but, as the Spirit of all grace, and that of faith in particular, he kept possession of Peter's heart, and made his faith soon to work again by love, for "he went out, and wept bitterly," cut to the heart with grief for what he had done to his dear Lord and master. However, the faithful and true Witness did not fail Peter in this time of trial; nor did the Lord suffer Peter's faith or love to fail from the Lord: "Lord, thou knowest all things; and thou knowest I love thee," saith Simon.

This "sieve of vanity" always attends "the breath of the Lord;" or the ministry of the Spirit. Soon after God had breathed into Adam the breath of life, this sieve of vanity came upon him and his wife, and sifted out all that was good. And, when God began to breathe on the dry bones of the house of Israel in Babylon, to revive their hopes of a return to their own land, the devil opposed it in the court of Persia one and twenty days,

Dan. x. 18. And in the holy land at their return we find this sieve working against Joshua, one of the anointed ones, who at the same time was standing before the Lord of the whole earth.

Yea, the Saviour himself was tried by this sieve of vanity; for, as soon as the Holy Ghost descended upon him like a dove, "then was Jesus led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." But where the breath of life comes not this sieve is seldom used; for there is no wheat to sift; all is chaff, and chaff needs no sifting. The ministry of the letter, and those seedsmen who sow the doctrines and commandments of men, are never followed "by the fowls of the air;" for the devils do not want to pick such seed out of sinners' hearts, for such seedsmen are the devil's own labourers. But, if the Lord sends a seedsman to sow precious seed, which is the word of life, then these fowls are all upon the watch, or upon the wing, to pick out the good seed from the mind and memory, in order to make the sinner unfruitful: and this he does by making him inattentive, or by setting some object before him to excite his lasciviousness, or by stirring up his prejudice, or by diverting his mind to worldly things as soon as he comes out of the house of God, till he hath forgotten all that he hath heard. And is it so? Do the breath of life and the sieve of vanity go together? They really do. I have never seen the sieve of vanity in use among the congregations of the dead. There are thousands in a profession in our day, who never knew what the fiery darts of the devil and the devices of Satan mean. The strong man armed keeps possession both of the impostor in the pulpit, and of the hypocrite in the pew; and his goods are in peace. He furnishes the preacher with presumptuous confidence, blind zeal, flowery speech, and to affect a musical delivery, to speak swelling words; and he instructs him in the art of oratory and elocution, in order to reach the feelings of corrupt nature, and to play upon them, till their bowels sound like an

harp, the blood will trickle in their veins, the hair moves upon their head, and a few deep sighs put the salt spring in motion, and pump a few drops into the eyes, which being distilled on the floor, and being considered as the quintessence of pious grief, and of all devotion, the work is done, the Spirit hath moved, the presence and power of the Lord have been present and a refreshing season hath been enjoyed: whereas the devil himself is the author and finisher of all such devotion. Such are the most completely self-deceived, the most secure in their carnal state, the most bitter enemies to the vital power of godliness, and the hardest souls in the world for a gospel minister to work upon. Such are worse, and more secure, than a real Pharisee; for a Pharisee is all for the law, but these are all for what they call gospel: a Pharisee dwells in a dry land, but these are hypocrites in Zion; not seekers of Christ, but foolish virgins; not work-mongers, but wolves in sheep's clothing. O the infernal trade that the devil carries on in our day by such instruments as these! The dissembled humility and meekness that they devil will varnish them with, and the counterfeited rays of an angel of light that he will spread abroad, through the instrumentality of such crafty and deceitful workers, are such as none can discern, not describe, but those in whom the living God shines, and whom the Lord condescends to teach. Some are carried on by the false flames of blind zeal, and the inward heat of their own spirit, raised and inflamed by noise and motion. "These follow their own spirit, and speak a vision out of their own heart, and have seen nothing," Jer. xxiii. 16; Ezek. xiii. 3. But, at times, conscience, the wrath of God, and disappointments, will so far discourage them, as to render them incapable of performing this branch of magic by fiery and false zeal: then they are obliged to have recourse to that of moving the passions; and there are several books extant to instruct them in this art, and to which they are obliged to have recourse, to enable them to carry on the cheat. Funeral sermons furnish these (instruments without life) with nice rosin for their strings: a few

pathetic lies over the deceased work like a charm in the bowels of the survivors. A peculiar tenderness must be observed in mentioning the fair sex; and heavenly expressions must be dropped in lascivious flames. This God calls alluring through the lusts of the flesh, and much wantonness. This art leads captive silly women; but all this is Satan's profit, not his sieve; he doth not desire to sift such as wheat: these are the tares of his own field, and chaff for his own fire; these are ensnared in holes; they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith restore.

It is where the breath of life comes that this sieve is used; and that every poor sensible sinner knows who is convinced of sin by the Spirit of God. When the breath of life enters the soul, and quickens it when divine sensations, motions, holy longings, desires, and affections, operate this strong man, his possession, and armour, are soon felt. Not a corruption in the heart, but the devil stirs up to resist the new principle; no species of uncleanness, lasciviousness, or even brutality, that was ever practised in all the world, but what the devil will bring to the mind: no blasphemy, anathema, or imprecation, that was ever uttered, but what he will pronounce in the mental ears of the poor sinner all day and night long: nothing that earth or hell can imagine against God, against Christ, or against the Holy Spirit, but what he will bring in, and fill the poor sinner's thoughts with: nothing odious, unsightly, unseemly, unbecoming, foul, filthy, obscene, diabolical, damnable, and opposite to true holiness, but what the devil will portray on the mind, and impress on the imagination of the poor, alarmed, awakened, terrified, and affrighted soul. Not a snare of death, nor a pain of hell, nor an evident token of perdition in scripture, in rebels, hypocrites, apostates, traitors, or reprobates, but what is suggested and applied to him. No; nor a terror, horror, fear, expectation or sensation, that ever pierced or influenced the minds of devils, but what Satan, with his art of mingling himself with the faculties of the human soul,

will influence the poor sinner with. Not a curse in the book of God; not a threatening, reproof, or rebuke; not a text pregnant; with wrath, displeasure, or indignation; not a passage that describes an enemy to Christ, a rival, or an unpardonable sinner, but what is brought home and applied to the poor, honest, and sincere seeker of the Lord; and that in all their fullest sense, and in all their most dreadful meaning that devils can invent, and self-despairing mortals can conceive. If he attempts to confess, pray, or call upon God, he is so confused, hurried, baffled, and confounded, that, so far from knowing what he says, he cannot tell where he is: his thoughts are scattered over the face of the whole earth, or chained down to the meditations of terror, or else employed in the dismal work of fathoming and exploring the boundless and bottomless abyss of hell. If he reads, he can neither think, consider, nor make a judgment of any thing. If in the house of God, and under the word, he can attend to nothing: all his attention is taken up with the oaths and curses and blasphemous revilings of this familiar spirit. If at any time the poor sinner can pay attention to but one word of support or encouragement, that is a refreshing time, a jubilee indeed; and the devil will be sure, if permitted, to make him rue for this ere he gets home, for presuming, or even daring, to entertain a thought that any one word in God's book could ever be sent or meant for such a wretch as he, who was doomed to damnation before the world was made, and who, at the same time, has every evident token of perdition upon him, and all the pledges, earnest, foretastes, and pains of hell in him. All this is but a faint representation of Satan's sieve; and well may it be compared to a sieve, for chaff from the floor was never blown with more violence than the hurried soul of such a poor sinner; and he is whirled round and round, till all his faculties and senses are so impaired, that he knows not what he is, where he is, nor what he does. All the chaff is sifted up to the very bottom; all his sins are before him; and all their

guilt in him: his beauty consumes as a moth, his soul withers like a green herb, and grief drinks up his spirits.

"I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth," Amos ix. 9. No impression, impulse, or sensation, from above; not one word of truth or promise applied; not one grace of the Holy and Blessed Spirit of promise; not one holy longing, or earnest desire; nor one deep sigh, pious groan, or budding hope, shall ever be sifted out of the heart of a poor sensible sinner, that feels his need, sees his lost estate, and is hungering and thirsting after the Lord of life and glory. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," when this sieve of vanity has well winnowed and emptied them of all self-righteousness, lightness, vanity, and self-confidence. "I will command, I will sift:" no sifting, without God's command; not one shake, nor one round-about in this riddle, without a divine order, "I will sift." The devil and his sieve are both in the omnipotent and terrible hand of God; and it is the smoking vengeance of heaven, burning in Satan, that drives him on with his sieve, as bad as the devil's darts drive us. But, after all, it is no more than "a sieve of vanity;" for all this labour and toil of the poor devil is vain, for he cannot destroy, though he aims at it. Moreover, it is called "a sieve of vanity," because the intention of God is to separate vanity and lies from us. The more vain we are, the more sifting we want: no vanity, no sieve. Peter's self-confidence was vain, and David's numbering the people was the same; and both procured this sieve. The incestuous person among the Corinthians gave himself up to vanity, and Paul gave him up to Satan, that he might be sifted, till his vanity departed from him; and as soon as his chaff was gone, he came into the barn floor again. The Lord's forerunner alludes to my text, and casts a light upon it; only, instead of the "breath of the Lord," he calls this power the "Holy Ghost;" and instead of a "sieve of vanity," he calls it

a "fan." "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire," Mat. iii. 11, 12. The Holy Ghost and fire come first; and this disturbs Satan in his quiet possession. The Spirit convinces us of sin, and Satan tempts us to despair of the mercy of God; which leads me to consider this fatal bridle in my text.

"And there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err." And here we may inquire what this bridle is which causes men to err. A bridle, in the figurative sense of the word, seems to be the secret power of God put forth and displayed in overruling, restraining, and directing mankind, according to the counsel of his own will; though man, who has this restraint upon him, acts as he thinks, with the bent of his own will, and without control, and is as ignorant of this restraint as a horse or an ass. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, determined to invade the city of Jerusalem, and was come forth with a large army for that intent; and he sent a blasphemous message of raillery against the Jews, the king of Judah, and against God himself: the hearing of which sent the pious king to prayer, and he requested the prayers of Isaiah the prophet also; and God sent the king this answer against the railing enemy: "Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest; and he shall fall by the sword in his own land." Here is God's hook in his nose, and his bridle in his lips; just as a man leads a bear, or rides an ass: and back to Nineveh he goes, and into the house of Nisroch his god, where two of his own sons kill him with the sword.

Again. "Bridle" sometimes signifies that awe, reverence, and fear, that God has planted in the hearts of mankind towards the higher powers, Romans xiii. 3, or our superiors, or even

aged persons. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man. Render fear to whom fear is due, and honour to whom honour is due." Of the reverse of this Job complains: "And now am I their song, yea, I am their by-word. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face. Because he hath loosed my cord and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me," Job xxx. 11. Job had dwelt as a king in their army, and had presided over their counsels; and as a great man he was greatly respected. "Young men saw me, and hid themselves; the aged arose, and stood up; princes refrained talking, and nobles held their peace; unto me men gave ear, and kept silence at my counsel." But now God had loosed the cord of his love, which had long visibly embraced him, and all that he had, and had sorely afflicted him; and those who feared him before, seeing him so debased and humbled, cast off all reverence, respect, and even natural affection, and spared not to spit in his face. Times of trial discover the affections of those who love in deed and in truth, from those whose love is dissimulation. But neither of these bridles are meant in my text. God does not say, I will put my bridle in thy lips; but, "There shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err;" which plainly shews that these persons do not receive the Spirit of God, nor the truth of God in the love of it; "because they are given up to strong delusions, that they may believe a lie;" for this bridle shall cause them to err. This bridle is not unbelief, nor is it false doctrine; for it is a bridle that guides a person into false doctrine, or that causes them to err, or to go astray into all manner of errors. And what can this bridle be? Why, it is pride. Pride is the devil's rod, or sceptre, by which he rules. "In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride; but the lips of the wise shall preserve them," Prov. xiv. 3. Before ever God gives a man up to believe a lie, or to fall into damnable heresies, which lead to destruction, the devil is sure to get this bridle into his jaws. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall," Prov. xvi. 18. This is the

bridle that leads astray. "The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee," Jer. xlix. 16. And again: "Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments," Ps. cxix. 21. And to this agrees the apostle: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strifes, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth," 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5. The devil is a wise and cunning adversary, and well knows what is most hateful to God; and there is nothing more hateful to him than pride. It was this very bridle that led the devil from the truth, even to become the father of lies. The Lord says, "He abode not in the truth:" what led him from it? The apostle tells us: "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil," 1 Tim. iii. 6. Pride lifted the devils up into self-admiration, and for which "God charged them with folly," Job, iv. 18. And this bridle is in their jaws to this day: hence they aspire even to imitate God, and want to be worshipped as God. The Saviour himself was tempted by the devil to fall down and worship him. When Satan gets this bridle into the jaws of a sinner, he is sure to make him hold his head up, and to walk with a stiff neck. His heart is swollen, and puffed up like a bladder, until his blasphemy boils up, and runs out of his mouth: hence the warning, "Talk no more so exceeding proudly, let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed," 1 Sam. ii. 3. A professor reined up with this bridle, is the most dangerous man in the world among weak believers: hence God blesses the poor simple soul that casts off all love and respect for him. "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies," Psalm xl. 4. O what a blessing it is to be kept from the foot of pride, which leads to presumptuous sins, and involves men in the great transgression. "O love the

Lord, all ye his saints: for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer," Psalm xxxi. 23.

Men of this cast, and in this state, act the same restless part that the devil does always meddling with religion, though always conscious that they have none: and so it is with Satan. Go into what part of the world you may, you shall find Satan carrying on some sort or other of false religion: among the Turks, the Arabs, the Egyptians, Romans, Russians, Indians: go where you will, you shall find idolatry, superstition, will worship, a form of godliness, altars, temples, sacrifices, soothsaying, or something called devotion; and all against God, and in opposition to him: and hence Satan is styled the god of this world; and a world of worshippers he has got in it.

A man with this bridle in his jaws is just like a bear with a muzzle; he can eat nothing that is good. The best spiritual provision that can be dealt out from a pulpit, the most delicious food or richest fare that was ever set before the household of faith, all passes by his mouth. The man with this bridle in his jaws is never suffered so much as to taste that the Lord is good or gracious.

With this bridle he is reined up so high, and Satan holds him in so tight, that he can stoop to nothing; no, not to divine revelation. There is not one sublime mystery in the kingdom of God, no revelation that God hath ever made of himself, of his wondrous works of creation, providence, grace or redemption, that he can submit to: he is wise above all that is written.

Let the highway to glory be never so clearly cast up, and the stumbling blocks removed let the standard be erected, and God's banner displayed let the door of hope be opened, and the path of life made never so plain it is all in vain: an infernal spirit ruling within perverts every thing; and one check by Satan with this bridle turns him out of the way. This bridle shall be in his jaws, causing him to err; for God (in just

judgment), by the instrumentality of Satan, "leads him forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall be upon Israel." "He is given up of God to strong delusions, that he may believe a lie, and be damned, for not receiving the truth, but taking pleasure in unrighteousness." And the devil, with this bridle, rides him, curbs him, reins him, and turns him whithersoever he will. "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back," saith the wise man.

He is a wonder to himself, and stands astonished at his own wisdom. Every false ray that the devil (transformed) darts into his heart or head, every time he looks into the scriptures with his false mirror, what wonders does he behold! All his discoveries are such as have lain hid since the world began, till this wonder of wonders arose, till he arose a prophet in Israel! Every servant of God that he hears, every God-fearing man that he converses with, heightens his astonishment and admiration. What fools, what blind bats, what poor idiots, do they all appear to be, when compared to himself, and to that perfection of wisdom that dwells in him! Now and then, indeed, there shall be a discovery made; a ray of light darted, a truth brought forth, or such a sound speech dropped, which he cannot condemn, and which, for a moment, may stagger him; but this is but seldom: and, as soon as ever the devil perceives this, he sticks his spurs in his side, and gives him another check with this double bridle; and away goes Jack, kicking up behind, for he must lift up his heels at every thing that savours of Christ.

In all his searches and researches God opposes him. "God resisteth the proud; but he giveth grace to the humble." He searches the scriptures to support his damnable heresies, and to strengthen himself in his wickedness. God resists him, and it appears a sealed book: he rages at it, and storms; perverts it, and brings forth his strong reasons against it: still it galls him, till at last he ridicules it, and rails against it, and despises

it "and he that despises the word shall be destroyed." He lies in wait to deceive the humble, teachable, tractable soul, that walks in the simplicity of the gospel; but God resists him, and discovers to the meek and lowly believer the hardened state and stinking savour of this tool of Satan; and he shuns him, and flees from him. These he hates the worst, and tries the hardest to deceive; and with these he has the least success; for God resists him, and instructs his own children by his Spirit. "He guides the meek in judgment, the meek will he teach his way." He labours to enshrine and exalt himself in the eyes and affections of God's people, in order to exclude them from Christ, and that he may be looked up to as a wonder from the Lord of hosts: but God resists him, till every professor that has any reverence of God, or respect for him, despises him, and looks upon him as an incurable leper, with his plague in his head, as a perilous transgressor, a hardened rebel, a cursed vagabond, an incarnate devil, and a walking hell, with every visible token of perdition upon him; and shuns him, and dreads him, as he would a fiery flying serpent.

It is upon these animals that the devil carries on the affairs of his kingdom, and his state matters. Without such men as these he could not well support his interest against the glorious light and power of the gospel of Christ. It is by such that Satan spreads his doctrines, blindness of mind, confusion, hardness of heart, hatred to the truth, pride, and presumption; in all which the kingdom of Satan stands. There is not a mystery in the Bible, not a doctrine essential to salvation, but what these men will attack. What arrogancy will they discharge from their mouth against the glorious doctrine of the Trinity; against the deity of the Son of God; and against the personality of the Holy Ghost! What contempt will they pour upon the satisfaction Christ made by his sacrifice; and upon the efficacy, weight, and worth of all his meritorious undertakings, sufferings, and finished work! To these Christ becomes a snare, a trap, and a stumbling. They kick, and he

smites; they presume, and he resists; they peep and mutter, and he baffles and confounds them.

Hence we see, that where the gospel comes, there Satan stirs; and the more the power of God attends the word, the more Satan lays about him. Some hear the word, and give their assent and consent to it; but, as soon as they go from the house of God, then comes the wicked one, and steals away the word sown in their hearts, and they become unfruitful. Another hears it with pleasure and delight, till zeal, diligence, joy, and a visible reformation appears; but these Satan fills with the deceitfulness of riches, and the cares of this life, and leads them away after these things, till he chokes the word. Another sort hear it, and receive it notionally in their heads, and wonderful gifts and abilities follow; but then this stony ground affords no depth for the word to root in, these having no root, in time of temptation fall away. Others fall into Satan's sieve, and are effectually shook, tossed, tumbled, and winnowed: but to these the Lord appears, and takes the prey from the mighty, and delivers the lawful captive, who never forgets the wormwood and the gall. And those who escape the sieve are caught in Satan's bridle; and this is the worst of all; for Satan will never let such an one rest till he hath involved him in the guilt of the great transgression: he will make him with this bridle set his mouth against the heavens, and his tongue go through the earth, by circulating his damnable heresy. But the Lord's chosen ones return to the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls, while waters of a full cup are wrung out unto them. Blessed be God for convincing us of our ignorance and blindness, and for humbling us to submit to divine revelation; but, above all, for keeping us from kicking, stumbling, and taking offence, at the glorious foundation that he hath laid in Zion.

Again. This bridle is said to be in the "jaws" of the people, causing them to err. Job makes mention of the jaws of the

wicked. "I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not, I searched out. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth," Job, xxix. 16, 17. Job compares these spoilers to a voracious beast, or mastiff dog, which, when they seize a child, a lamb, kid, or calf, hold so fast, that there is no such thing as rescuing the poor creature, but by wrenching open the jaws by violence. Just such is an oppressor, a grinder of the face of the poor, an overreacher, an overbearer, who is as insatiable after money, as a starved beast is after prey: "these greedy dogs can never have enough;" they go about the city, and grin like a dog, and grudge, but are never satisfied. Job set himself against these, and raised the court against them, and made them relinquish the spoil they had taken. "He hath swallowed down riches," says Job, "but he shall vomit them up again; God shall cast them out of his belly." Just such a beast of prey is a wolf in sheep's clothing, among the sheep and lambs of the Lord's fold; or, to keep to my text, just such an one is a damnable heretic, with this bridle of the devil in his jaws; to devour, divide, and scatter the sheep of Christ is all his work; and he is so bent upon it, that "his sleep is taken away, unless he hath caused some to fall."

The mystical body of Christ is compared to the human body, and the different members of the body to individual believers of different sizes in growth, or in different stages of grace. The foot and the ear represent the diligent and the attentive believer; and such as 1039 these the devil is most watchful over; and when one of these devourers of the poor and needy have been let loose upon the flock, nothing has been left for the Lord but three mangled members, and these sick in bed. "Thus saith the Lord, As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria, in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus on a couch," Amos iii. 12.

In the heart of this monster of iniquity Satan rules; in his vain imagination Satan is exalted, and there he raises his high towers of self-conceit, human wisdom, self-sufficiency, independency, carnal reason, and the wonderful light of fallen nature; and every other "high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ, that not one thought may ever go into captivity to the obedience of him." The reins of this bridle is infernal power, which leads this deluded wretch" captive at his will; nor can he recover himself out of this snare of the devil:" he hath chosen his own way, and God hath chosen his delusions. The bit of this bridle is pride; and a poor wretch hardened and stiffened with pride would sink into everlasting burning, before he would bow, yield, submit, or acknowledge an offence, or himself in an error. The Jewish Pharisees would plunge themselves in the guilt of innocent blood, and into the unpardonable sin up to the neck, and expose their nation to ruin, and themselves to the greatest damnation, rather than submit to the person or doctrines of Christ, or acknowledge the truth of one charge brought against them by the Son of God. This bridle was in their jaws, and the devil rode them, and managed them, in all their persecutions of Christ, from the manger to the cross: and they pursued him as bad after his resurrection, until the Roman sword came upon them; and then, just as Pharaoh and his troopers perished in the Red Sea, so these were drowned in destruction and perdition: "for wrath came upon them to the uttermost; and at the day of judgment such" (saith Christ) "shall go away with the devil and his angels."

God hath set a brand upon several classes of people, which those who are skilled in physiognomy may read; "a whore's forehead" exhibits a defiance of all virtue, modesty, and chastity; it can redden at nothing; nothing can deface it but "Mary's repentance." The midnight cry will make them change pale, but it will not make them blush. A fallen countenance informs us of the destruction of a false hope, and of some

awful bill of indictment being filed in the court of conscience. A sad countenance on the butler and baker of Pharaoh informed Joseph of the sorrow of their hearts. The anxiety, pious concern, wishful eyes, and blubbered cheeks of the spouse in the Song, told the daughters of Jerusalem that she was crossed in love. "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with thee?" The scorner in his chair is to be known by his "brow of brass," which no reproof nor rebuke from man, no warning nor allurement by the ministry, ever melts or removes. A papist carries the mark of the beast in his forehead; judicial blindness, bigotry, hatred, and revenge, are evident enough. But this ungovernable animal in my text, when he is equipped, is the most conspicuous of all: defiance of heaven appears on his brow, pride swells his cheeks, and Satan looks through his eyes, and never suffers one plain truth, in real honesty, ever to come from his mouth. "This is the pale horse, and he that sits on him is Death, and hell follows him," Rev. vi. 8. Be not like a horse or mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, and I will guide you with mine eye, saith the great Commander and Leader of his people; and where this eye, this true light shines, God grant we may ever follow. Amen, and Amen.

William Huntington S. S.

A Portion to Seven, and Also to Eight

Give a portion to seven, also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. - Eccl. xi.2.

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO MR. AND MRS. DAVIDSON, Postern-Row, Tower-Hill

Beloved in God, grace and peace be multiplied to you through our Lord Jesus Christ. Time has been when I could have sung a Christmas carol at your door; but the bellows which used to fill the pipes are much decayed by being much used, on which account I have been obliged for many years to lay by the melody of my songs, as Israel of old did of their viols; and, being incapable of producing these fruits of the lip, I here send you a Christmas offering, which is the fruit both of the head and of the heart. They came promiscuously into my mind, and sweetly employed my thoughts as they came; and, though apparent contradictions in themselves, yet I brought them all into harmony through the anointing of the Holy One; nor was I a little delighted while my mind was engaged in them. I call it a riddle upon all in all, and you are allowed all the Christmas holidays to find it out; but, should any of the fruit in this garden of nuts be found too hard for your teeth, send them back to the huckster, and he promises to lend you the use of his crackers. Accept of this as my Christmas-box, and take in good part the additions; I mean the compliments of the season, which are, "A merry Christmas," springing from Christ formed in the heart the hope of glory; for a merry heart doth good like a medicine, and he that hath a merry heart hath a continual feast.

"I wish you a happy new year," and full possession of the blessings of the new covenant; namely, a new heart, and a new spirit, and the use of new tongues; much service in the newness of the Spirit, and a happy walk in newness of life; many comfortable sips of the new wine of the kingdom, and many pledges earnest, and foretastes of those new enjoyments which are promised by the new Thing to the new-born heirs of promise, in the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. This is the wish and earnest desire of,

Dear friends,
Yours in the everlasting covenant,
William Huntington, S.S.

A RIDDLE.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," Isaiah, ix. 6.

This world had been standing upwards of three thousand years before Mary brought forth her first-born son, Luke, ii. 7. And yet that son was brought forth ages of endless date before this world was made: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth: when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled; before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world," Proverbs, vii. 22-26. Thus he that was brought forth and set up from everlasting, was not brought forth till this world had been standing upwards of three thousand years.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," He was the son of Adam, the son of Noah, the son of Shem, the son of Abraham, the son of Isaac, the son of Jacob, the son of Judah, the son of David, the son of Solomon, the son of Rehoboam, &c. &c. and the son of Joseph the husband of Mary, and has been known and called the Son of Man from age to age; and yet he is no man's son, nor would he suffer himself to be so called. "What think ye of Christ, whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool. If David then call him Lord, how is he is son? Matt. xxii. 42-44.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," There were thousands of millions born before him; that is wonderful; and yet he was

the first that ever was born: "Also I will make him, my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth: my mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him," Psalm lxxxix. 27, 28.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," As he had many fathers, so it is as plain that he had many mothers: he was the son of Eve, the son of Sarah, the son of Rebekah, the son of Leah, the son of Rahab, the son of Ruth, the son of Zion, the son of Mary, and the son of all believers: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother," Matt. xii. 50. Thus he hath many fathers, and thousands of mothers - and yet "he is without father, and without mother," Heb. vii. 3.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," According to the genealogies written by Matthew and Luke, his descent is traced from Adam; he descended likewise from God, and he descended from heaven; and yet he descended neither from God nor man, for "he is without descent, and without pedigree," Heb. vii. 3.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," Elijah raised a child from the dead, and Elisha raised another; and even a young man just buried, when he touched the bones of Elisha, came to life; Christ raised the widow of Nain's son and Lazarus; all which were raised before the death of Christ, and yet he was the first that was ever raised: "He is the first-begotten from the dead," Rev. i. 5. "He is the first-fruits of them that sleep," 1 Cor. xv. 20. And the first that ever trod the path of life from the tomb: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption; thou wilt she, me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore," Psalm xvi. 10, 11.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," "When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face

of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 27-31. And, though he thus rejoiced in the habitable parts of his earth, yet there was no part of his earth then inhabited; and, though his delights were then with the sons of men, yet there were no sons of men to delight in.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," Jesus, our Immanuel, never lived nor existed before he was born of Mary; and it is plain that he was but thirty-three years of age when he died, and yet "he had neither beginning of days, nor end of life," Heb. vii. 3.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," Our Immanuel maintained and supported all the human race in life when he was expiring himself; and lived King of Glory in heaven when he lay dead in the tomb.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," When he ascended on high he entered heaven, and there he must abide till the end: "Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things," Acts, iii. 21. And yet, "behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him, nor yet the house that Solomon built," I Kings, viii. 27.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," As our high priest, "He, by his own blood, entered into the holy place," Heb. ix. 12; "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us," Heb. ix. 24. Thus he entered the holy of holies, and appears in the presence of God for his people, yet "he is with us always to the world's end," Luke, xxviii. 20.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," He is "flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone;" and there-fore real man, perfect man, and the son of man; and yet he is "a worm and no man," Psalm xxii. 6. Not a man, but a thing: "Therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God," Luke, i. 35. "His name shall be called Wonderful," When he was a child just born, and a son given, the government of the church and of the whole world stood upon his shoulders, Isaiah, ix. 6; and yet he could not walk alone himself, but had an ass to carry him and his mother into Egypt.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made," John, i. 3. "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or princiPalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist," Col. i. 16, 17. Yea, even "the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them," I Samuel, ii. 8. And yet the earth hath neither bases nor pillars; this the scriptures witness: "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing," Job, xxvi. 7.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," His generation hath been most faithfully traced and published both by Matthew and Luke; one of which is expressly styled, "The Book of the Ge 15cf neration of Jesus Christ," Matthew, i. 1; Luke, iii. 23. And yet his generation never was, nor can be, declared either by men or angels. "He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation?" Isaiah, liii. 8.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief places of the concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones,

will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" Prov. i. 20-22. Wisdom is here described as crying, as crying without, and as uttering her voice even in the streets; yet "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street," Isaiah, xlii. 2. And, though many in the great day will "begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets; he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are: depart from me all ye workers of iniquity," Luke, xiii. 26, 27. And no wonder; for, although he might have taught in their streets, yet they never heard his voice there; this is witnessed by the scriptures of truth.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," "The thing that hath been, is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new?" Eccl. i. 9, 10. Yet sure I am that there is something new to be found. "How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? For the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man," Jer. xxxi. 22. This was a new thing promised to the antediluvian world - "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." It is called "a new thing" in the prophetic age; and was a new thing in the latter days, for a virgin conceived, and a virgin brought forth a son; and this new thing was done under the sun; and must for ever remain a thing new, for it never shall be antiquated.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," He was seen as the Son of man by Daniel, and his tremendous appearance was that of the Judge of quick and dead. "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool," Daniel, vii. 9-13. His white hair denotes his gravity and great age, which the hoary head always proclaims; but he was not born till four hundred years after that vision.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," He was seen by Adam and Eve, by Abraham and Sarah; by Lot, by Moses, by Joshua, and Balsam; by Gideon, Manoah and his wife; by thousands in his lifetime, and by five hundred brethren at once after his death; and yet no man hath seen him, nor can see him - and this the scriptures aver; "Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." 1 Timothy, iv. 14-16.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," He was the richest that ever appeared in this world; there was not one thing that was not put under him, for he was the "heir of all things," Heb. i. 9; and yet "the poor and needy man," Psa. cix. 16. So poor that he lived all his lifetime upon charity, and has been supported by alms almost eighteen hundred years; and is such an admirer of the liberality of his benefactors, that he declares, that even a cup of cold water shall never pass unnoticed nor unrewarded by him.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," He performed the greatest exploits that ever were performed in his weakest state, and by his weakest part; for "he was crucified through weakness," 2 Cor. xiii. 4. He took "the hand-writing that was against us out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it," or in himself.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," He fought the greatest battle, single-handed, that ever was fought in this world, or that ever will be fought. And, though he was the first and the only one that fell by the sword in the field of action, yet, by his

own fall, he conquered all the enemies that he ever had, or ever will have, whether on earth or in hell.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," He is wonderful also in his family, which consists of new-born babes, little children, young men, and fathers: and yet there is neither a babe nor a little child in it. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed," Isa. lxxv. 20.

"His name shall be called Wonderful," I shall send, my dear friends, no more of these seeming discords at this time, but leave you to bring them into harmony, and subscribe myself,

Yours to serve in Christ Jesus,

W.H. S.S.

THE EMPIRE OF SATAN

Luke 11:18

William Huntington
(1745-1813)

"If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand."

Luke, xi. 18.

It appears, from this text, that the devils have a chief, or a head over them, who is called Satan; and that the other devils are his princes, as Beelzebub is called the prince of the devils. And we read of principalities and powers among the devils, which Christ spoiled by his death, and triumphed over upon the cross.

There is not one hint dropped in the scriptures that the devils ever fall out or disagree; for, as there is no door of hope opened to them, nor any ground to expect any favour from God, there is no place for repenting or relenting; their mind is hardened and shut up under the guilt of the unpardonable sin, and a continual sense of God's wrath; and this fills them with eternal hatred both to God and man.

Their abode is principally in the air, Eph. ii. 2. Their palaces are the hearts of poor sinners, as Christ tells us "When the strong man armed keepeth the palace, his goods are in peace." Many are the ways and means by which the devil contrives to keep his possession; and, wonderfully hath he

fortified himself in the hearts of the children of men, as appears by the account of the wise man: "There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard," Eccl. ix 14-16. This little city is mount Zion, and it was in the loins of Adam when this great king besieged and took it. The bulwarks of Satan, by which he keeps possession of his strong holds, are

First, Darkness and blindness of mind. "If our gospel he hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Hence the kingdom of the beast, or the popish countries, are said to be full of darkness, Rev. xvi. 10. And the reason of this is, because it is full of devils; it is called the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, Rev. xviii. 2.

Secondly, Hatred to the light, and a love to darkness, keeps Satan in the throne of the sinner's affections. A sinner blinded by Satan cannot endure the light of divine revelation; it discovers the follies of his life, the corruptions of his heart, and the vanity of his hopes, and flashes conviction upon his conscience; on which account he hates it, and such an one loves darkness, and is willingly ignorant. And so saith the Saviour, "This is condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; for every one that doth evil hateth the light, nor will he come to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." Nor are any men so self-sufficient in their own esteem, or so lifted up with their knowledge, as those that are given up to

blindness of mind, and hardness of heart; witness the boasted infallibility of the pope, of the popish clergy, and of the Jewish pharisees, who said, even to Christ himself," Are we blind also? If ye were blind, saith Jesus, ye should not have sin; but since ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth." Those that are sensible of their blindness and ignorance Christ illuminates; but to those who boast of their light and knowledge, wisdom and prudence, his mysteries are hid; for they love darkness, and he leaves them in that which they love. Such hate God, who is light, and Christ the true light, and the glorious gospel, which is a light to our feet and a lamp to our path, and the ministers of Christ, who are burning and shining lights, and the children of light; and this is their condemnation; and, being in a state of condemnation, Satan keeps possession of their hearts, and reigns in them.

Thirdly, Another bulwark, by which Satan keeps up his empire in the hearts of the children of men, is that of self-righteousness. Every subject of Satan eats his own bread, and wears his own apparel, Isa. iv. 1. Hence the threatening, "And it shall come to pass, in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel," Zeph. i. 8. "There is a generation (says God) that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness," Prov. xxx. 12. And this was the generation that fell, in the days of the Lord's sacrifice, for not being believers in Christ; but it was the bond-children that fell, both by the sword of the Chaldeans and of the Romans; for they were ignorant of God's righteousness, and went about to establish their own righteousness, and so stumbled at that stumbling stone, and Christ became a rock of offence to them. And sure I am that there is nothing under heaven that sounds so disgusting in the ears of a child of God as the boasting and lying of self-righteous souls: "All these things have I kept from my youth up (says one), what lack I yet." "Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier

than thou." "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and never at any time transgressed I thy commandment, and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends:" And, if such come into a profession of religion, being drawn by the novelty of the doctrine, the persuasion of friends, or by the fluency of the preacher, they keep the poor web of their own weaving close about them; and, if at any time common convictions lay hold of them, they will immediately take some of the Saviour's new cloth to patch their own garment with (for they cannot venture upon Christ alone), and so "wear a garment of linen and woolen together," Deut. xxii. 11; and by this method the rent is made worse. How was the apostolic church pestered with these self-righteous persons! it was these that wanted the law of Moses and circumcision enforced upon the young Gentile disciples; they believed in Jesus, but they were all zealous of the law, not of the gospel. False brethren they are called, and they came in privily to spy out the liberty of the saints, that they might bring them into bondage. Every subject of Satan's kingdom is a self-righteous person, whether in the church or out of it, and will be discovered as such sooner or later. "And, when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? and he was speechless. Then said the King to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer, darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xxii. 11-13. This wedding garment is the righteousness of Christ, which God imputes to all believers; and it is no other, as will appear plainly by comparing the following texts together: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me,

These are the true sayings of God," Rev. xix. 7-9. Now gospel Zion will tell us what this fine linen is; for she triumphs wonderfidly on the day of her espousals. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels," Isa. lxi. 10. From this best robe the self-righteous Jews are excluded, which was the heaviest judgment that ever fell upon them; for it terminated in the desolation of their cities, and in the utter dispersion of themselves; and so it was predicted: "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Let their table [or altar] become a snare before them; and let that which should have been for their welfare become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitations be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents. For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. Add iniquity to their iniquity, and let them not come into thy righteousness," Psal. lxi. 20, 21, &c. And who does the Saviour palm these upon that are not to come into his righteousness? He palms them all upon Satan; nor will he allow them to call themselves Jews: "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan," Rev. ii. 9.

But that which appears more shocking is, that there are whole churches, so called, even in gospel days, that are destitute of, and utter strangers to, the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ; of which he much complains. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;

and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17. She was wretched, being destitute of grace and truth; she was miserable, being in her sin and under the curse of God; she was poor, being destitute of that faith which lays hold upon the true riches; she was blind, being ignorant of the anointing of the Holy Ghost; and naked, being without the wedding garment.

Fourthly, The next prop of the devil's kingdom is false confidence. Satan influences the mind of the wretched sinner with an infernal persuasion, and a firm confidence in things which are arrant lies; as it is written, "His coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 9-12. Every subject of Satan's kingdom, except a few who are in black despair, are equipped with this diabolical faith; and this was the first seed which the devil sowed in the mind of Eve: "Ye shall not surely die." This was Satan's lie, and she believed it, and made trial. Oh, what a crop hath that seed produced! What a great matter hath that little fire kindled! This false confidence is the deceived sinner's right hand, by which he feeds himself with his own deceivings, and with which he holds fast every lie that Satan begets in his heart; this gives Satan full possession of his soul; nor can he deliver himself from his possessor, nor does he desire it: "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Isa. xlv. 20. This is the right hand and the high arm of every idolater, heretic, hypocrite, pharisee, formalist, or heathen, that is, or ever shall be, found in the dominions of Satan. All the ministers in the world could never move nor stagger the confidence of one in such a strong delusion.

Thousands of the Israelites fled at the command of Moses, but Corah and Dathan stood their ground; they knew that their cause was good, and their doctrine true; namely that the people were all holy, every one of them.

The Roman centurion smote his breast at the crucifixion of Christ; the disciples wept; Pilot washed his hands from the blood of Christ; and the very dead which slept arose, many which beheld the sight smote their breasts and returned: but not so the scribes and pharisees; they were at a point: they knew that they were doing God service: their confidence could venture the risk both of themselves and their posterity: "Let his blood be on us, and on our children." Discourses from a pulpit, that would make a hundred real believers tremble, would never undeceive one thus given up and strengthened by Satan to believe a lie: you may make him storm, but you will never make him stagger: "A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil; but the fool rageth, and is confident," Prov. xiv. 16. There are none more sure of heaven than such, nor are there any farther from it. It was a proverb among the Jews, that, if but two were saved, the one would be a scribe and the other a pharisee. If this was the common people's opinion, what must be their own? But they were farther from it than publicans and harlots. In their own account they are sure to be first, but in God's account they are always last. "There are last that shall be first, and first last; for many be called, but few chosen." The full assurance of faith in the brightest saint never stands so unmoveable as the false confidence of a hypocrite; for the best of men have been straitened and bound in spirit at times, and sometimes even on their death-bed: but not so this subject of Satan's kingdom; "for there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm," Psalm lxxii. 4. And well may their strength be firm, when the strong man armed keeps the palace. Satan is not divided against himself - all his desire of sifting the saints is only to shake, weaken, or blow away the grace of faith; but he exerts all his might in the support of a

faith that is of his own begetting. Does the faith of a saint lay hold of a treasure in the heavens, the hypocrite will rise nearly as high in imagination as the saint does in confidence. "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment; though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds, yet he shall perish for ever," Job, xx. 5, 6. And it is often seen that the confidence of such men lives as long as they do: "His confidence is rooted out of his tabernacle when he comes to the king of terrors;" Job, xvii. 14; but not till then: nor do I believe that this king of terrors is temporal death, for some of them have no bands in that; but the second death, or eternal death, must root up every refuge of lies; for in hell they lift up their eyes, and, being in torment, they are obliged to cast away their confidence.

Fifthly, Another bond of iniquity, that binds the subject of Satan to his sovereign, is carnal security or false peace; for, so sure as the saints keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, so sure does Satan hold his subjects to himself in the cords of their sins, and in a peaceable conscience; and to this agrees the Saviour: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils," Luke, xi. 21, 22 Here we may see that Satan uses all the armour and artillery that he is master of in keeping his possession of the sinner; and he maintains his hold by keeping his conscience in a false peace: which peace consists of hardness of heart; he is past feeling; in blindness of mind, he sees not his danger; and in composing the soul with a benumbing stupidity, which keeps it insensible; so that, as the prophet says, "they are cast into a deep sleep, they lie down and love to slumber," Isa. lv. 10. These are either at ease in Zion, or at ease in the world: they are never emptied from vessel to vessel, they settle on their lees; they are not in

any trouble as others, nor are they plagued like other men. This is the devil's state-bed; and Satan has got more to guard it, and to keep him in quiet possession of it, than ever Solomon had in all his glory: every ambassador from the infernal regions is sent with the same cry to the sinner's ears as that which the devil maintains in the sinner's heart. If any judgment, sudden fear, or unexpected calamity come on, so as to arouse the sinner but in the least degree, these ambassadors are called in: as it is written, "Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace: and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him," Micah, iii. 5. Ahab was a great admirer of these good tidings. The devil had taught all his four hundred and fifty prophets to send Ahab to Ramorb Gilead in the possession of this peace. Only one prophet belonging to another master stood out; but they prepared war against him, and God prepared war against Ahab and them too. These ambassadors are generally called builders up, and they certainly are great supports to the devil's kingdom, and labour hard to stop up every breach that Christ makes in it; and of this God complains: "For every one from the least even to the greatest is given to covetousness; from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace," Jer. viii. 10, 11. These are Satan's messengers and Jezebel's rockers. He sent four hundred and fifty to that daughter of his, and she kept them at her own expense. Many remedies also, as well as messengers, are made use of to keep conscience composed and Satan in quiet; such as kerchiefs and pillows, Ezek. xiii. 18; untempered mortar, and daubing with it, Ezekiel, xiii. 10; biting and stamping; waging war with every one that sounds an alarm, or cries fire-forms of prayer, and daily and hourly tasks; the sacrament at a dying hour; salt fish in Lent; and innocent amusements, cards and plays; concerts of sacred music and holy water; extreme unction, human

absolution, and ecclesiastical authority; fastings and pilgrimage, All these, and the power of the strong man too, are little enough to keep Satan's courts in peace.

The sixth pillar of Satan's kingdom is a false hope. There are no hypocrites in the world, except those few in black despair, but what are buoyed up with a false hope; which hope centres in the flesh, and is founded on human performances; and as a man abounds in dead works, so he abounds in hope; and, when he obtains a vain supposition that he exceeds all others in human merit, this raises him to the full assurance of hope; and they, in their expectation of the great reward, exceed in firmness one half of the children of God; nor is their hope clogged with those doubts and fears which are often raised about the state of those endowed with a good hope through grace; for, although Satan often suggests to such that they are hypocrites, and that their faith and hope are vain, yet he never preaches this doctrine to those to whom alone it is applicable, for he is not divided against himself; if he was, how should his kingdom stand? Established in this false hope, and equipped with this expectation, many will approach even the gate of life, and that with boldness: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able," Luke, xiii. 24. The foolish virgins had no other anchor than this when they cried, "Lord, Lord, open to us." If ever such hypocrites have any doubts or fears about them, it is when the clamours of conscience, through the judgments of God, sound too loud to be drowned by the cry of, Peace, peace; but even then, when the alarm is past, they appear the more steadfast. A false hope is the cockatrice egg, and human merit is the spider's web, Isa. lix. 5. But, when the wrath of God enters the conscience, the egg will be crushed, and then out comes the viper, the curse of God will break the egg, and the flames of hell will consume the web. "The hypocrite's hope shall perish; whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web," Job, viii. 14.

The seventh bulwark, by which the devil supports his empire in the heart, is human wisdom. Satan has no fools in his kingdom, though God hath few else in his. "We are fools for Christ's sake," says Paul; yea, and all must become fools before they are made wise, and fools afterwards too, for they know nothing of themselves. But not so the subjects of Satan, "for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light," Luke, xvi. 8. There are no more than two succeeding generations - the children of God, and the children of the devil; so that it is in the generation of vipers that this wisdom lies. All the followers of Christ which he had blessed, fell under the sentence of these wise men among the Jews: "This people that know not the law are cursed. Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out." These wise ones can tell you the origin of the world better than he who made it, if you can believe them; they will give you a description of the eternity of matter, though they will not allow him to be eternal that made the world, John, i. 3. They have found out that every star is a habitable world, and they have multiplied heavens as fast as the papists have multiplied mediators, which never had any existence but in their brains; they have given to the globe of the earth such velocity of motion as all the weights and machinery in the world could never give to a wheel, nor all the nitre upon earth give to a shot; they have ascribed such intelligence and influence to the planets, that they can tell you at Christmas when it will rain and when it will shine all the year round; nay, more, they will cast your nativity by them, and read your fate or destiny, so that you may know your end from the beginning without going to the gipsies; so profound in knowledge are these whose "wisdom is earthly, sensual, and devilish."

And, if Satan sows a crop of these tares among the Lord's wheat, in order to answer some future purpose, their wisdom is still retained; they are no less than the children of the wicked one, though they are mixed among the children of the

kingdom. They may be known by their noise, for they are swift to speak and slow to hear, James, i. 19; by their station also, for there is none of this sort that are servants of all, or servants of any; they are all masters, that they may receive the greater condemnation, James, iii. 1. This sort must not be sought for in the lower room, but in the highest seat. Satan sends no understrappers, such as helps or fellow-helpers to the truth; those that he sent into the church in Paul's days were all apostles, 2 Cor. xi. 13; Rev. ii. 2. They are like Pharaoh's statesmen, the sons of the wise, the sons of ancient kings, Isaiah, xix. 11; and true enough, for we know of no kings upon earth so ancient as devils. A subject of Christ's kingdom must compare himself with the scriptures, and he that doth so finds himself foolish enough; but Satan's subjects compare themselves with themselves, and Paul says they are not wise: but I say they are "wiser than seven men that can render a reason."

Eighthly, The highest state of majesty in Satan's empire is pride, it was this that lifted him up to his present dignity: "Not a novice," says Paul, "lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil," 1 Tim. iii. 6. When a spark of this exalting light shines into the head of one of these wise subjects, what wonders do they discover! Not all the saints upon earth can esteem others so much better than themselves, as these esteem themselves better than others. The hardest task that you can impose upon such men, is to set them down at the foot of another to be taught; nor doth any thing exercise their patience more, than to keep silence while another speaks, they are to be known by "a multitude of words."

They take after their father for assiduity; they go to and fro in the earth, and walk up and down in it; and wherever the sons of God assemble some of these are sure to present themselves before the Lord; not to get instruction, for that is

not possible; they go rather to correct mistakes and to try the spirits. Those that follow the Saviour only set him to rights when they thought he was wrong: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" "Thou bearest record of thyself, thy record is not true." "He is mad, why hear ye him?" And if any wonderful display of supernatural power appeared, they ascribed the glory to none but their own father: "He doth it by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." Agur was never half so brutish in his own eyes as these are angelic in theirs. The everlasting gospel is called foolishness, and omni-potence is termed weakness by them; but "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men," 1 Cor. i. 25. The scorner's chair is the highest bench in Satan's kingdom; he that mounts that seat is upon the pinnacle, above the ground, and above all about him, and of course nearest to him that is the prince of the power of the air.

The next in power to devils are sin and death; sin reigns unto death, and death reigned from Adam to Moses, and from Moses till now. To keep up the government of these two is the chief of Satan's labour, whether it be in his subjects or by them. And, when the Saviour shall raise his own family, and change them and fashion them like unto his own glorious body, then shall the works of the devil be effectually destroyed; and both sin and death, which came by Satan, shall be the everlasting destruction of himself and of all that die in his interest. Then shall Satan and all his infernal principalities and powers, together with sin and death, and all dead sinners, depart together; they shall go with the devil and his angels into their everlasting habitations, far enough from Christ and from all the subjects of his kingdom. Then shall be brought to pass this saying, "God taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong."

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Luke 11:20

William Huntington
(1745-1813)

"But, if I, with the finger of God, cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you," Luke, xi. 20.

SIN entered into the world by Satan, and death entered by sin. Sin separated between God and our souls: but the incarnation of the Son of God brought our nature back to God, which sin had separated; and the blood of Christ made us nigh, whom wicked works had made far off. Sin had its beginning by the tree of knowledge, and it had its end on the accursed tree. Adam sinned and died, and Paradise was lost; Christ was made sin and died, and a better Paradise was gained. The woman, being first in the transgression, was condemned to sorrow in child-bearing, and that sorrow brought forth the woman's great deliverer. Sin is the sole cause of all our misery, and a sense of this misery renders us proper objects of God's mercy. By sin and death Satan aimed at the eternal destruction of men, and sin and death will be the eternal destruction of Satan. Nothing pleased Satan so well as bringing mankind under the sentence of death; and that sentence executed upon Christ bruised Satan's head, and he himself and his works were destroyed in the same nature that he had ruined. By the incarnation of Christ grace and mercy come to men, and by the death of Christ honour is brought to the justice and holiness of God. Satan is degraded, sin is

condemned in Christ's flesh, and the sinner is saved; and yet God appears just when he justifies the ungodly. Sin is freely pardoned, and yet vengeance is taken of our inventions; forgiving and cleansing is of free grace, and yet God is faithful and just in forgiving and cleansing; the sinner is bought with a price, and yet saved and glorified by free grace. Sin brought us all under the wrath of God, but in pouring that wrath upon Christ everlasting love was displayed to men. All the works of devils have been to destroy human nature, and by a judge in human nature shall all devils be judged and destroyed. Devils are the accusers of the brethren, and the brethren shall be the judges of the devils. Men, aspiring to be like gods, fell under the dominion of fallen angels; Christ, by being made a little lower than the angels of light, raised us to an honour above them.

Christ spoiled principalities; and therefore some spoils out of the devil's kingdom the Lord Jesus Christ must have, according to an ancient stipulation. These are the objects of his love, the purchase of his blood, and therefore must be the trophies of his victory. He is not to have them without a price, nor will they submit to him without conquest. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death," Isa. liii. 11, 12. A portion with the great, is some few selected subjects out of the kingdoms of the great potentates upon earth; and the spoil that he is to divide with the strong, are God's own elect, which were given unto him, and which he takes by the dint of his sword from the strong man armed. He begins his conquest,

First, By the light of his countenance,

Secondly, By the edge of the sword. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined," Isa. ix. 2. This is the first attack upon the strong man's palace, and is called the sinner's translation: for so it is written, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," Col. i. 13.

Secondly, The edge of his sword. "In that day the Lord, with his sore and great and strong sword, shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent, even leviathan, that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea," Isa. xxvii. 1. This light enrages the devil, and it likewise shews the sinner his awful state; and the sword of the Spirit wounds the devil and the sinner too. Satan's rage at the light rises from a fresh remembrance of the devil and the sinner too. Satan's rage at the light rises from a fresh remembrance of his former state bliss and happiness, which for a moment softens him; but the consideration of all being irrecoverably lost, and the thoughts of future and endless torment, rekindle all his rage and desperation; and, finding the poor sinner, who has long been his lawful captive, going into that light and bliss which he by his pride and rebellion had lost, provokes him to jealousy, and pierces every power of that infernal intelligence; and this he makes the poor sinner know and feel, for he hurls at him all the foul, filthy, obscene, desperate, rebellious, and blasphemous oaths, curses, imprecations, and invectives, that he is master of - and all against God; and then accuses the poor sinner of it, to sink him in despair; though, at the same time, it is the devil's own sin; for such things never entered the sinner's heart till the devil lodged them in it. However, this serves to shew us that the rays of divine light discover him, and remove his mask from the understanding, and himself from his dark abode; and this is evident by the violent temptations that follow: for what call has he to tempt, entice, allure, terrify, and threaten us with his future success and

advantage over us, if he reigned in the heart and could take us captive at his will? His fruitless attempts and terrifying threatenings are sufficient to convince us that the Lord Jesus has crushed his power, bound him by his providence, and disarmed him of the panoply by which he kept his goods in peace. By the light of the Lord's countenance, and by the sword of the Spirit, shall the kingdom of the beast be destroyed, which is said to be full of darkness. Light shall discover the damnable deceptions of popery, and the sword of the Spirit shall slay the souls of those that cleave to them; "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he that now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming," 2 Thess. ii. 7, 8. Thus is Satan dethroned: "And if I, by the finger of God, cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you."

Secondly, The Lord, by the power of his Spirit, subdues the the carnal enmity which hates the light; he bows the sinner's will and makes him willing; he searches the reins, wounds the spirit, and makes the heart honest: and one of an honest heart will cry, " Search me and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Yea, he comes willingly to the light, that his deeds may he made manliest that they are wrought in God. Thus the enmity is slain, and a most earnest desire after reconciliation with God is kindled in the soul; he is made willing and made honest; he accepts the punishment of his iniquity, and had rather lie under the rod than be in carnal ease; and would feed upon stripes and bitter reflections rather than be given up to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." Thus it appears that the subjects of darkness are all blinded by the god of this world, and their hearts are filled with enmity and hatred against the light; and this their enmity discovers itself at every soul which God

illuminates, or into which the true light shineth: and thus the Jews rejoiced in John's light for a season, and then said "He hath a devil." And, when the Sun of Righteousness visited them, then they said he had a devil and was mad. Thus Satan labours to blind the eyes, and arms the soul with malice, at every heavenly ray that darts upon his veil. But, if God shines into a sinner's heart, and searches, tries, and discovers the evil of it, and by wounding the spirit makes the heart honest, leads the soul to the light, and puts a cry into the poor sinner for mercy, such an one the devil labours to baffle, confuse, puzzle, perplex, confound, tempt, accuse, reproach, and even ridicule him for hypocrisy in every thing he does. It is Satan's work to applaud the hypocrite, to fondle his deceitful heart, to prop up his seared conscience and lead him to self-admiration. But the soul that God displays his power in is always wrong and never right; all is guile, nothing sincere; all feigned, nothing real; all is deceit, nothing sound; if he speaks he takes him to task for every word; overhauls him, and accuses him of insincerity and falsehood in every thing he has said. To the pharisee in his forms, and to the hypocrite in Zion, Satan is a smooth-tongued prophet, a dauber, a reformer, an healer of the breach, and a builder up; but to the mourner in Zion he is a reprover, an accuser, an inquisitor-general, an envious observer, a malicious overseer, a laborious puller down, and a desperate destroyer of God's heritage. This is his work, whether he labour at the heart by suggestions, or by his ministers in the pulpit. Satan is not divided against himself; if he was, how should his kingdom stand?

Thirdly, Self-righteousness stands in the way of God's kingdom, and must be demolished before the empire of Christ can be set up. Satan propped up the Jewish scribes and pharisees in this web; they not only justified themselves before men, but they pleaded their worth, and will plead it before God; they sought righteousness by the works of the

law, and went about to establish it, and were the greatest opposers of the kingdom of God, for they shut it up against men; they entered not themselves, and such as were going they hindered. And it is plain that the praying publican in the temple, and Mary Magdalen the harlot, went into the kingdom of God before them. This pillar of the devil's kingdom, this grand idol of vain imagination which the papists and the world worship, is destroyed in the hearts of God's elect.

First, By an application of the law of God.

Secondly, By the quickening influences of the Holy Ghost. The entrance of the law, with all its fears, bondage, terrors, and wrath, will not do of itself; for a sinner in black despair, and given up to a fearful looking-for of judgment, will sometimes plead his merits before men, though he dare not plead his cause before God. I have known instances of this myself. There is such a thing as desperate pride, and the devil often influences the most awfull apostates with it, insomuch that, when they are in dispute with the children of God, they will even pervert the scriptures, plead their own worth, and bring forth their strong reasons against the King of Jacob. But when God applies the law to a chosen vessel he attends the application with the awakening, alarming, quickening, self-emptying, self-abasing, and soul-plercmg operations of the Holy Spirit of promise, which gives life to the soul, and makes it feel hunger, thirst, long, crave, cry, pray, search, seek, watch and wait at wisdom's gate till the door of mercy and of hope be opened. A soul under such circumstances is condemned on all hands - by the law, by the gospel, by conscience, by every saint, by the self righteous pharisee, by the refined hypocrite, by every impostor in the pulpit, by the common worldling, and by every possessor of a seared conscience that is past feeling, and even by the beasts of the field; for he would sooner be a brute, a fowl, a reptile, or an insect, than a human creature; any thing rather than a

condemned and guilty sinner, accountable to a just and holy God. And he will honestly tell you that every creature that God has made answers some good end in the creation, and in some way or other glorifies God; but he of himself never did, nor ever can, except God glorify his truth and justice in his eternal damnation: this he sees, this he feels, and this he will honestly own and confess before God or man. It was such convictions as these that turned Daniel's comeliness into corruption, Paul's brilliant performances into dung and dross, and Zion's splendid righteousness into filthy rags. All convictions, unattended by the spirit of life, terminate in self-pity, in hatred to truth, in hatred to the saints, in dishonesty at heart, in enmity to God, in love to human applause, in worldly grief, in infernal pride, and in desperate sorrow. All of which are fruits unto death, or dead works. But the spirit of life from God quickening the soul and making intercession with unutterable groaning for it, and the wrath and terrors of God by the law blasting and withering all human glory, soon strips the sinner of his rags, if it does not strip him of all reliance on his own arm, and always brings him to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and he labours hard to work one out; but, as soon as he hears from the gospel of Christ that there is such a thing as imputed righteousness, O how he longs for it! And sure I am that this divine life in the soul, which makes the sinner hunger and thirst, shall terminate in his justification unto life. "For, if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 17. Self-righteousness is the boast and glory of every class of professors of natural religion; and nothing but an application of the law, attended with life and convictions by the Spirit, will ever stain this pride of human glory. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of God bloweth upon it." Satan will prop up and swell with pride every soul that trusts in himself that he is righteous, for such are his own children. All the scribes and pharisees among the Jews,

whom Christ declared were of their father the devil, were such as went about to establish their own righteousness; but the righteousness of faith the hypocrite cannot endure: he is an enemy to God who provided it, to Christ who wrought it out, to the gospel which reveals it, to the Spirit who applies it, to faith which apprehends it and puts it on, to those ministers of righteousness which preach it, and to all that seek it or follow after it. In this best robe the Father embraces the returning son; in this wedding-garment Christ receives his spouse; and the devil knows this and hates the match. If God justifies who can condemn? This makes Satan's accusations and charges groundless, and saps the very foundation of his kingdom. Grace shall reign, but then it is "through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. v. 21. When justification is past, glorification is sure; whom God justifies, them he also glorifies: and where the Sun of Righteousness rises, there he never goes down. All the time that Joshua stood before the Lord in the filthy garments of his own righteousness, Satan stood at his right hand to accuse him, reproach him, calumniate him, tempt him, confound him, and resist him. You may see here the insolence of the devil, in presuming to take the upper hand even of God's high priest, and when in the presence of God, and when attending upon his function. But Satan pays no regard to sacred offices nor ecclesiastical orders; whether it be Joshua the high-priest under the law, or Judas the apostle under the gospel, he will have the pre-eminence as long as the filthy rag of human righteousness is kept on and trusted in; for "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." And "he that believeth not is condemned already." And this Jack Ketch will have the ascendancy over malefactors. But, when the Lord said, "Take away the filthy garments from him;" and added "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment;" this made the devil knock under and relinquish all claim to his prey. "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; is not this a brand plucked out of the

fire?" Zech. iii. 2. A brand plucked out of the fire, a rotten lamb of a barren, corrupt, and dry tree, half burnt up: but now plucked out of the fire of divine wrath, and out of the fire of Satan's rage, and from the fire of hell. Hence it is plain that the devil hath no better column to his empire than self-righteousness. Witness the many thousands that Satan has raised up to preach it among the Papists, among the Arminians, among those of the establishment, and among a great number of the dissenters: and no wonder, for, "if Satan be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?" Another prop of Satan's kingdom, which the Lord demolishes, is False confidence. Satan pays particular attention to this branch of his empire, for he knows that unbelief and damnation are inseparably connected; and that wherever this pillar stands fast Satan is secure in his strong hold. This was the first seed of Satan, that Eve conceived in her mind, and by this Satan usurped his Power and authority, and where this stands fast Satan hath full Possession: "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." False confidence credits every lie that Satan applies, and gives the lie to all that God says. When God gives a man up to false confidence, it is that he may believe a lie and be damned, 2 Thess. ii. 11. And this is evident, look which way you will. Let Simon Magus give out to the city of Samaria that he is the great power of God, and the whole city believe it and respect the impostor; let Barcocab tell the Jews that he is the Messiah, and he is received; let the pope out promise absolution and heaven to a whole nation of natural men, and there are but few doubts or scruples about it; let the soldiers which kept watch over the Saviour's tomb tell Pilate, that when they were fast asleep they saw the disciples of Christ steal away the body of our Lord, and he believes it as soon as the high priest begins to persuade him. But, though this false confidence never staggers at a lie, yet it can give no credit to what God says. It makes God a liar, 1 John, v. 10. Yea, and speaks it out too. Elisha told the Shunamite she should

embrace a son, and she said, "Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid." The same prophet predicts a measure of fine flour for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in Samaria; and an infidel replied, "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be." Jesus said, "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness:" the Jews replied, "Thou bearest record of thyself, thy record is not true," John. viii. 12, 13. God told Eve, in the day that she ate of the tree of knowledge she should surely die; the devil told her she should not, but she should be as God - she cast away all the confidence she had in God's threatening, but embraced both the lies of Satan. This is one of the high things in Satan's strong hold that exalteth itself against God, and against the knowledge of him; but Christ by the spiritual weapons of our warfare, pulls down Satan's strong hold, and this barrier if it among the rest. Whatever God sends with a divine energy to the souls of his elect, the grace of faith, by the Spirit, is one ingredient in that divine energy or power: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word" of God. When God, by the ministry of his servants, sends his word with power, so that the sinner is judged, condemned, and the thoughts of his heart made manifest, he will fall down on his face and worship God, and report that God is in that servant of a truth. This is strong faith in terrible tidings; here are terrible sensations and terrible things in righteousness, and a strong confidence that this power is of God, and he reports it of a truth. What a man feels that he believes; faith and power always go together; faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the Power of God. When Peter charged the blood of Christ upon his audience, all that felt the dint of the sword believed the charge, and cried for quarter. Faith, when wrought in the soul, is a general receiver of all that God sends; nor shall the power of unbelief, however strong in a chosen vessel, make either the faith of God or the word of without effect.

Every notion that a careless sinner entertains of God is false, and unworthy of him. He talks of his mercy and goodness, pity, and compassion; but he cannot endure to hear of his sovereignty, holiness, justice, truth, immutability, or terrible majesty. None of the subjects of Satan's kingdom hold these things in their creed, unless it be here and there one who hath been lifted up with pride till he is fallen into the condemnation of the devil, and then he is obliged to do as the devil does, "believe and tremble." But this is a desperate faith which attends the entrance of the devil when he returns to take possession of the house from whence he came out, which is the enemy's last stage, and the sinner's worst end. It was this faith that influenced the heart of Judas when Satan entered into him, and which Satan labours to strengthen and confirm, and often eases himself of some part of his burden by spending the shafts of his rage on the trophy of his victory.

But the convictions of God's elect are attended with the incessant groanings of a spirit of supplication, and an insatiable thirst for the mercy of God; a continual fear of his convictions leaving him, or of their going off the wrong way; a fear of being left to himself, and of being given up to the hardness of his own heart; so tired is he of his own way, and so sick of himself. And that soul that would carry his burden to the grave, if he might obtain hope in his death, rather than be given up to carnal ease and a worldly spirit, is the man that hears the rod, Micah, vi. 9; and the man that accepts the punishment of his iniquity, Leviticus, xxvi. 41-43: he is the hungry soul to whom every bitter thing is sweet; and to such the promise is made, "They shall come that were ready to perish."

Christ Jesus, who is the omnipresent God, when he comes to set up his kingdom in the heart of a poor sinner, does not discover or manifest himself all at once. It is as the spouse explains. It is first the voice of my Beloved. The life-giving

word of reproof and rebuke, piercing, searching, and trying our hearts, comes first; this sinks us, and salvation for such appears impossible; but "Behold he comes, leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills." Mount Sinai stands sadly in our way. Election (called a mountain of brass, Zech. vi. 1), Satan's power, and the huge catalogue of our sins, are all in our way as so many mountains. But "every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed," Isa. xl. 4. The next view the spouse had of him was somewhat nearer than the last. "He standeth behind our wall," Song ii. 9. The ceremonial law was a wall that hid Christ: the substance was obscured by the shadow: but when he discovered himself to the spouse the shadows fled, and when he came in the flesh he broke down the middle wall of partition, and made Jew and Gentile one; and gives us both access by one Spirit unto the Father, and even communion with himself. Moreover, our own supposed merit stands sadly in our way. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit." But Christ always sends the rich empty away, and never relieves us till we become poor in spirit: the kingdom of God is promised to such. When the above wall is down he comes a little closer - "He looketh forth at the windows," Song ii. 9. These windows are, first, the doctrines of the gospel, in which Christ appears as the subject matter of them. In this glass the natural man sees his face, and his heart too; and in the same glass the Lord is to be seen. "We behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord; and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. Zion's windows are the brilliant and illustrious perfections of God shining in Christ Jesus, and reflected on the word of his grace. "I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones: and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord," Isa. liv. 12. Hence it appears that these windows and gates are a display of the glory of God when a poor

sinner enters into the presence, grace, favour, and joy of the Lord, and is favoured with an unctuous experience of his glorious grace. When these windows from on high are opened by the ministry of the word, Isa. xxiv. 18, how do poor sensible sinners fly to them when the report of it is spread abroad. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?" Isa. lx. 8. Furthermore, the mind and understanding of a man are the windows of the soul, even as the eyes are of the body; and every time he shines into the soul, like the sun, he illuminates us and warms our hearts. These are the soul-ravishing discoveries that he makes of himself when he looketh in at the windows: thus we see through a glass darkly, but in time to come we shall see him face to face. The last view the spouse had of him was flourishing through the lattice, Song ii. 9. A lattice is a wooden or iron window, cross-barred; some parts of it are entirely open, but where the bars go it is entirely dark and obscure. There is a glorious ray of light at times that shines upon every grace of the Spirit in the heart; but there is an inbred corruption, like the wooden bars of a lattice, which sadly intervenes and obscures the light: the light shines in darkness (in this sense), but the darkness comprehends it not. Sometimes we are wonderfully indulged with the light of his countenance, which fills us with joy and gladness; but these are sure to be followed with desertions. "He hideth his face, and then who can behold him?" He kept back the face of his throne, and spreads his cloud upon it: where he shines, grace flows out; when he is hid, corruptions struggle hard. Through this lattice-work he shews himself; for when the bridegroom visits us what a heavenly banquet doth the soul enjoy! But when the bridegroom is taken away, then we fast in those days; for the children of the bride-chamber cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them. The Lord's absence and the stirrings of our corruptions sharpen our appetite, and the Lord's visits and revivals of his work afford us infinite fulness and satisfaction. Thus by degrees does the Lord discover

himself, and by slow advances approach the hearts of the darlings of his soul, when he comes to east out the strong man armed, and to assume the throne of our affections. Hence it appears, also, that convictions by the law, and divine life by the Spirit, together with sore temptations, are sent to debase and humble us, to soften and meeken us, to mortify and empty us, that the kingdom of God may be much longed for, sought after, and sensibly needed; for "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."

The kingdom of God stands in power, in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. This power dethrones Satan, mars the reign of sin, and delivers us from the fear of death; righteousness justifies us from all sins, all things, and all charges; peace is the blessed effect of pardon, and a sure pledge of favour and friendship with God; joy springs from a sense of divine love and a hope of future glory: and it is under the influence of the Holy Spirit that these things are seen, known, felt, and enjoyed; and all these things bear an everlasting date. In the King of Zion the believer finds everlasting strength: Jesus brought in for us everlasting righteousness, he bestows upon us everlasting peace, and promises that we shall return to Zion with everlasting joy, and that grace shall reign to everlasting life: and grace is nothing less than everlasting love.

The scorner's chair is the highest seat in Satan's kingdom; the Saviour's feet the highest seat in Christ's kingdom: the proudest professor is the greatest man in Satan's empire, and the most like his sovereign; and he that humbles himself like a little child, the same is

A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE ORIGIN AND BASIS OF GENUINE FAITH

William Huntington
(1745-1813)

FAITH is a persuasion in the mind of the truth of God, whether It respects his word or works. "God shall persuade Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem." It is a fruit of God's Spirit.

The faith of God's elect stands in the manifestations of God's holiness, truth, and justice, attended with divine light and the power of God's anger; such an one, is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth," 1 Cor. xiv. 24. This is the man that God debases and humbles, who is wounded, made sore, and inwardly smarts for sin, and who trembles at God's word; to such God looks, and with such will he dwell.

2. Such a soul knows and feels himself in the hand of God, and that he is at God's disposal, and at the disposal of no other; and what God intends to do with him, whether to save him or destroy him, whether to make a public example of him or shew mercy on him, he knows not; but, as there is a powerful and perpetual cry in his heart for mercy, and now and then a word of encouragement applied to him, there is a peradventure and some expectation; and the sinner is as

sensible of the power that holds him, and that bears him up, as he is of the terrible majesty that makes him tremble. His faith, from first to last, "stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," 1 Cor. ii. 5.

3. When the Spirit of God produces hope, and energy in prayer increases, and many scriptures descriptive of our case are presented to view, and some short intervals of godly sorrow are felt, the darts of Satan lose their force, and the reflections of divine anger often subside, till future deliverance through Christ appears no less at times than certain. "Fear not," says God, "I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." On this powerful arm faith rests. "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" God's arm and faith in the report go together.

4. When pardon takes place, faith receives the atonement of Christ and stands in it. "By the blood of thy covenant I have rent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." And nothing is more sure than this gaol delivery: "He that believes shall receive the forgiveness of sins." God purifies the heart by faith: and such hold the mystery of faith, which faith stands in a pure conscience, 1 Tim. iii. 9.

5. Faith stands in the blessing of God: "As many as are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." And God's blessing on Mount Zion is life for ever more: and "he that believeth is passed from death unto life;" yea, "he that believeth hath ever-lasting life."

6. Faith stands in the righteousness of Christ imputed: "To us it shall be imputed if we believe on him that raised Christ from the dead. "Yea, this righteousness is to all and upon all that believe: and the sinner is assured of this. "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength," Isa. xlv. 24.

7. The faith of God's elect stands in the witness of the Holy Ghost witnessing our adoption: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," and "he that believeth the Son of God, hath the witness in himself," 1 John, v. 10.

8. The faith of a saint stands and triumphs in the everlasting love of God, for faith works by love; and to this agrees the beloved disciple: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John, iv. 16.

9. Faith stands in the joy of the Spirit of God, and in the peace that Christ made by the blood of his cross. God fills us with joy and peace in believing.

10. Faith stands in Christ Jesus revealed in, and manifested to the soul "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, as it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him," John, xiv. 21. The above commandments are his word, as he explains it: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," John, xiv. 23. Thus faith stands in the love of God made known, and in Jesus Christ manifested to the soul. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," Eph. iii. 17.

11. Faith stands fast in the filial fear of God: which fear is peculiar to God's children, and which hath the goodness of God for its object; and it emboldens the believer to fly to God, and to expect his protection in every time of trouble. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his children shall have a place of refuge," Proverbs, xiv. 16. These are the footsteps of genuine faith, and the footsteps of the flock; for "we walk by faith and not by sight." And by the power of God is the believer kept through faith unto salvation. And these

divine bases on which faith stands are more firm than the everlasting hills.

But what is that poor phantom which passes so current for faith in our days? Just nothing, and worse than nothing; for it is a powerful delusion of the devil, which a just God gives the enemies of his truth up to. "God shall send them strong delusions, that they may believe a lie and be damned," 2 Thess. ii. 11.

This faith in a lie is nothing less than rash presumption; it presumes upon God, and lays a claim upon him, without one scriptural warrant to venture on. And, in the general, the father of lies begets this faith in the minds of poor sinners, under the alarming ministry of graceless men, who are ministers of the letter, or of the bare word of God, without having either the Spirit or his grace in them. The sentence of death and of condemnation, which are in the preacher, is communicated to such a hearer. "The letter killeth."

The sinner being by nature a child of wrath, and naturally in bondage to the fear of death, and the curse of God being habitually in the tabernacle of the wicked, these are all stirred up, and natural conscience is terrified, while the devil spreads dismal glooms and horrors on the mind, with which he bewilders and distracts the poor wretch; these pass for convictions, and are just such as Ahab had when Elijah met him, and as Saul had when he fell on the ground before the devil in Samuel's mantle: for with these convictions there is no spirit of life to quicken the soul; no true light shining into the heart to discover the desperate deceitfulness of it; no spirit of supplication to set the sinner to crying day and night unto God; no hunger and thirst after righteousness, after the bread of life, or after the living God. A sinner under such convictions, may be known by the following remarks:

1. He feeds upon the vanities of this world in the midst of all his infernal terrors, and hates the light and truth under all his horrors. "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me. Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me. They return, but not to the Most High: they are like a deceitful bow," Hosea, vii. 14, 15.

2. It may easily be seen that, as there is no spirit of supplication or crying to God, neither is there any thirst after him; they return, but not to the Most High; as Saul did; he returned, but it was to one of the witches that he had formerly expelled, not to God: and so Judas, he returned, but it was to the priests, to whom he confessed his sin; but not to God, nor yet to the master whom he had betrayed.

3. Such souls may be known by their pride; for they are never filled with that self-loathing which a soul feels that is quickened by the Spirit of God; there is the leaven of legal pride working in them under all their convictions, and they set themselves up as men of wonderful experience, though they are without hope, and without that experience that worketh hope. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works?" Nay, it is never excluded by legal terrors, Rein. iii. 27.

4. Such a sinner holds fast free-will and self-righteousness under all his convictions. I once knew a preacher who often fell into these legal convictions, till he was like a wild bull in a net; but every time he came out he preached free-will, self-righteousness, and universal redemption, and was looked upon as a man wonderfully taught of God; but it was by the God of this world. I once preached for him at Sheffield in Yorkshire, and disputed with him afterwards till midnight, and began with him the next morning and continued at it till noon,

and stopped his mouth, but could not strip him of his spider's web. The last time that I inquired about him I was informed that he had left off preaching for some time, and was confined and mad; which was what I had long expected. "They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return," Jer. viii. 5.

5. Nor do souls under such convictions as these cleave to the children of God, nor to ministers of the Spirit, but to them of the letter: as the prodigal son did under his legal terrors: "he joined himself to a citizen of that country;" not of the heavenly country, but of this; not to a citizen of Mount Zion, but to a citizen of "Jerusalem that now is, and is in bondage with all her children:" and he tried hard to fill his belly with husks, and would have done it if the Spirit of life had not entered into him; but as soon as he was quickened he felt a mighty famine, then he left his husks and cried for bread. "This my son was dead;" and while dead he cleaved to the swine. But he "is alive again:" and this life gave him his appetite, his cry, and his motion towards God; and the food that fed his soul was Christ crucified, imputed righteousness, the everlasting love of God, and pardon and peace by faith in the blood of the Lamb; all of which are meant by the fatted calf, the best robe, the ring, and the shoes; and every soul that feeds not upon these is as sure to perish as he is born. Now let us see the conversion of this modern professor.

He attends the minister of the letter under whom he got his wound; and by and by the same insensibility, presumption, false confidence, blind zeal, and deceitful hopes, which possess the preacher, are communicated and applied by the devil to this convicted sinner, and out he comes into liberty, as he calls it. This is his conviction, and this is called a seal of such a man's ministry; like priest, like people; he hears the word, and anon with joy receives it; yet hath he no root in himself.

Now he compares himself, not with the word of God, nor with the experience of the children of God, nor with the ministers of the Spirit, but with those to whom Satan sends him, those of his own caste. "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." Then they are fools, 2 Cor. x. 12.

2. He now makes his conversion known to the preacher; and others in the same delusion give their judgment of the work, and conclude it to be a real work of grace; and the poor deluded mortal believes it and is established in it; and thus his faith stands in the wisdom of man, but not in the power of God.

3. He often finds his passions moved by oratory; for he is very fond of an orator, and he drops a few tears; this is called a watering time with him, and it passes for godly sorrow. At other times his fancy is tickled, and he laughs and rejoices: this passes for the joy of the Lord; but God gives it another name. "The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment," Job, xx. 5. "As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of fools," Eccl. vii. 6.

4. He goes and tries himself and his state under other ministers of the same caste (for there are but very few others in our days), and he hears different definitions of faith, and rather excels in confidence the descriptions that are given: this wonderfully establishes him. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety." Thus one builds up a wall, and the other daubs it with untempered mortar; and there it will stand till the storms of divine vengeance rend it, and then it will be no more, neither them that daubed it," Ezek. xiii.

5. In order to make this deception complete, the devil ceases to stir up the concupiscence of the sinners heart, and doth not

roll him in uncleanness as heretofore; that he may see that there are some fruits without, as well as joys within; this feeds his pride not a little. Thus the unclean spirit goes out of the man, and the house is empty, swept and garnished.

6. Now and then poor conscience will struggle and move her pulse, as if something else was wanting, and some doubts will rise up. He makes this known to such as the devil sends him to, and they tell him it is the motions of the old man, and Satan's devices, and cry, Peace, peace; this settles him for the present, and thus he receives the witness of men, but not the witness of God, which is greater, I John, v. 9.

7. Sometimes such an hypocrite is brought by curiosity to hear a minister of the Lord; and, perceiving something new, he is wonderfully ravished with the novelty, and new joys seem to spring up: he takes some of the new cloth to patch his old garment with, but parts with nothing of the old: the more he hears the more his head is furnished, and he is ready to pluck out his own eyes to give to the preacher; but by and by he hears him describe a genuine work of grace, and conscience seconds the motion, and his heart-strings begin to give way, and then off he goes to one who cries, Peace, peace: and after this he becomes a most desperate enemy both to the preacher and his doctrine, for such cannot endure sound doctrine. The Jews rejoiced in John's light for a season, and then changed their minds, and said he has a devil.

8. This sort of professors are to be known by a multitude of words; for they are more swift to speak than they are to hear. This brings many eyes upon them, and they are looked up to as saints of no common magnitude: this leads their minds much to think and study to get something to say; and the more he talks the better figure he cuts in talking; and now he is wonderfully elated with his gifts; reproving, exhorting, and praying in company, becomes his element, and this

increases both his pride and his presumption. He has got the gift of prophecy, and in his own conceit understands all mysteries, and all knowledge, and a faith strong enough to remove mountains, and yet is nothing but sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

9. He sometimes meets with an honest soul who sees through him, and speaks to him, and who tells him his doubts of him, and shews him his state: this mortifies his pride and injures his consequence; he storms sadly at this. "A wise man feareth and departeth from evil, but the fool rageth and is confident," Prov. xiv. 16.

10. If the lip of truth hath damped his joys, he calls together a company of them of the like occupation, and asks them: one tells him he has been much edified by him, another has been reclaimed, the bowels of another have been refreshed, and another established; and thus he is compassed about with a whole cloud of witnesses, and he believes them all, and no wonder: "For the simple (or fool) believeth every word; but the prudent man looketh well to his going," Prov. xiv. 15.

This is the modern faith of the day, and it passes as current among us as Birmingham halfpence do. And I believe that there are many congregations in this country that have not one grain of any other faith than this among them; and sure I am that the devil is the author of it, and the wrath of God will be the finisher of it; for whenever the unclean spirit returns to his house with seven spirits more wicked than himself; or whenever persecution and tribulation come on, or the fiery trial to consume this hay, straw, and stubble; then, like Alexander the coppersmith, Demas, or Judas, down they go; and no wonder, for they never stood upon the foundation that God hath laid in Zion.

William Huntington

LETTERS TO S. S.

Dear Sir,

YOUR ministry having stripped me of all my false joys and false confidence, and of all my false notions, and undeceived me, and brought me down to an acquaintance with the plague of my own heart, to a sense of guilt, and of the anger of God revealed in a broken law, and caused me to fly, trembling, from the wrath to come, has also been blessed to me in raising me to, and often encouraging my soul in hope; and many a word of support and encouragement, attended with light and information, has been sent by God to me, when ready to faint, from your mouth; and, I think, I may call your ministry the strength of my heart. My trouble, and these blessings communicated, have effectually taught me both to prove and highly to prize a pastor after God's own heart; having found you as such under God, and the best friend to me in all this sinful, miserable world. Numberless are the blessings which I have received in the course of three or four years' labour and travail. But under a sermon you preached the 30th of June last, from Isa. liv. 1, I almost thought my bonds would have bursted, but there was not sufficient strength to bring forth; and, although soon after I lost the sense of it, yet it was such an effectual blow to Satan and my unbelief, that they have not entirely recovered it since. Last Sunday morning's discourse was strengthening, encouraging, and informing; and sent of God to me I believe it was. The two Sundays before being wet and dirty, and having some miles to drag a cumbersome carcass and a burdened heart, it made me fret; and Satan is neither backward nor awkward at helping forward such calamities; his advice was, to have no

more of this. I thought if the next Sunday was so I would not come, but would go and hear _____, who is sound in the letter, and make myself as comfortable as I could. But in the course of the week I found some nearness to God, and a heart to pray; and prayed him to send fair weather for my journey, a blessing at his house, and to let it be a sign betwixt himself and me. The morning was fine, which encouraged me; and you preached from 2 Cor. i. 24. I will not trouble you with the particulars; but God furnished you with that subject for me, I believe, among the rest. It was the strengthening and encouraging voice of a good God to my troubled, fearing, and desponding heart, by the mouth of his servant, I do believe, and a word in due season it was. But before I got home I lost it all in company with the devil, and sunk in despondency up to my neck; and, although some secret power and good hand has hitherto held my head above, yet I fear that I shall, after all, be left to sink. I am pressed in spirit, and sensibly pursued by the avenger of blood. O that I may get into the city of refuge before overtaken! I know that Jesus Christ is near to fly unto, being near to all that call upon him. O that I was but safe there, that my soul may live! But fearing I shall fail and come short, fearing I shall die an incurable with the plague of leprosy, I am full of tossings to and fro. But excuse my intrusion, sir; to make one request, is the cause of these scribbled odds and ends appearing to you.

You know, sir, the world is stuffed with forgers of lies, soul-starvers, and physicians of no value; and how applicable the words of the Lord Jesus are to our state, that faithful labourers are few; that there are many in obscurity that cannot get to hear you, and, according to your late prophecies, we may say, "Wo unto us, for the day goeth away, &c." That you have often lately sounded an alarm about your own departure, and it seems there is to be no succeeding Elishas; may I therefore, dear sir, solicit to see the two sermons on True and False Faith in print, if it meet your approbation, and you have time;

that you may preach once more to us in the country, as well as to your charge in town; and when it pleases God to take you, you may, being dead, yet speak, and have a voice in the world till it is burnt up. Much gospel, and many preachers of it, to be sure, there are, and it is in and all round our parish; but it is not that which is the power of God to salvation. Husks and dry breasts can afford no entertainment to the hungry and thirsty: this you well know, sir, and I have experienced the disappointment.

Thus, reverend sir, have I made known the desire of my heart concerning publishing your sermon, in simplicity; but withal leaving it to your superior judgment and perfect knowledge of all these things. I believe I have a place in your heart, and that you are a real friend, which has emboldened me to presume to make this request. In complying with which, if you can, take pity on us that are stationed at a distance, and help us who desire at least an interest in your prayers. And that God may bless you in body and soul, and continue you with us, must, while there is life in my soul, be the prayer of

Q. IN THE CORNER.

Feb. 8, 1800.

TO Q. IN THE CORNER.

Sir,

YOUR unexpected tidings have afforded me some encouragement in the good work in which I have been long engaged. You have not been suffered to deal with me as too many have done who have been long suckled, dandled, swaddled, and adorned with all the external ornaments and embellishments that appertain to a form of godliness destitute of the power. I have long thought that the unclean spirit going

out of a man, and the devil leaving that man under a minister of the letter, in order for him to sweep and garnish his house with reigned faith, false hopes, dissembled love, natural joys, head notions, blind zeal, speculative knowledge, false light, gifts of speech in prayer, in exhorting, or in preaching, is the very quintessence of infernal deception, or the masterpiece of devils; it is forestailing the Saviour's market, counterfeiting and at the same time counteracting, the work of the Holy Ghost. No small number of this sort (which I call the worst of all materials) have come under me; and wonderfully enamoured and ravished they have been with the novelty of the doctrine; but, alas! the new wine was put into the old bottle, the new cloth was put upon the old garment, and the precious seed was received into stony ground. The wine in such a vessel cannot keep; nor can such a robe of divers colours, a linsey-woolsey garment, be fit for the Lamb's wife; no more can the precious seed take root in such a soil. And this I have often seen; for when once the glee of novelty begins to wither, and poor honest conscience disturbs them with the return of his fits, then the old composing draughts become needful, and, as sure as ever one appears in public that walks in the light of his own fire and in the sparks that he hath kindled, off he goes to his own vomit again; and I believe that such return no more, nor do they take hold of the path of life.

But you inform me that the Lord hath stripped you. I know that he will take away the filthy garments of all those that he clothes with change of raiment; and I believe that stripping the sinner is the hardest work, and in the general a work of time; for, as sure as the Lord finds a tree to rend, so sure the sinner finds a time to sew, Eccl. iii. 7. "The Lord breaks down, and he builds up," Eccl. iii. But when this working arm is destroyed the work is as good as done; for "he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength;" and it is the ungodly, not the self-righteous, that he will justify.

If thine account of stripping and undeceiving be genuine, I have no doubt of the glory being revealed, for that must follow. Besides, the door of hope hath been displayed already, and thou wast almost within it; and where the spirit of supplication knocks the door must open. We are not to labour in vain, nor to bring forth for trouble. If divine life causes the labour, divine love will effect the delivery. God will not cause to labour, and not cause to bring forth; nor will he bring to the birth, and then shut the womb. The Spirit shall open the promise, and bring forth the blessing, and he will open thine heart to receive it in the love of it. It is love that completes the new birth, and even this attends the Spirit of life when the soul is quickened. What is God's rod, but the effect of his love? And what is the desire of a man, but his kindness? And what is smoking flax, but the fire of love in the ashes? And who love the Lord? only them that hate evil, and loathe themselves in their own sight on the account of it. When the Spirit enters into the heart all these attend him, whether we know it and feel it or not: take it all in one verse, "As soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children." I could not comply with your request fully, for want of time; besides, my times of exercise come on so fast, that I am obliged to drive old things out to make room for new: but I have put down the heads, which I think is sufficient; for, as you have been for some time instructed and brought forth to act the part of a hypocrite in Zion, you know more of false faith experimentally than I do, and are better qualified to enlarge upon it; and as for real faith, you will be brought to try the evidences of that as the Spirit leads you on; for the footsteps of the flock, which go up from the washing, or which follow the Lord in the regeneration, go from the experience of one truth to another, till they grow up into the covenant Head, who is truth itself, and the fountain of truth: this is the centre where we are all to meet in the unity of the faith. Wishing your presence in this solemn assembly, I subscribe myself,

W. H., S. S.

THE EXPECTATION OF THE CREATURE, AND ITS CERTAIN DELIVERANCE *Romans 8:19-21*

William Huntington
(1745-1813)

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God," Rom. viii. 19-21.

The apostle, in the beginning of this chapter, asserts that there is no condemnation to them who are interested in the salvation of Christ, who are led, not by the carnal lust of the flesh, but by the love, comfort, and life-giving power, of the holy Spirit of God: verse 1.

The reason assigned for this is, because the law of faith, which is written on the mind by the Spirit, and the law of love put into the heart, make us free from the destroying power of the law of sin, which is in our members; and from the damning power of the law of death, which was engraven on tables of stone: ver. 2.

For, as the law could neither remove guilt, destroy sin, justify the sinner, nor give life, God sent his own Son in our nature, that, by his sacrifice for sin, our sins, being imputed to him,

might be condemned in his flesh, when he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and by his blood put away our sins: verse 3.

From the first verse down to my text he is describing a child of God in distinction from them who are in the flesh, and who are carnally minded, in enmity, living after the flesh, and destitute of the Spirit of Christ: but the great question is, Who this creature is which is in such earnest expectation of the manifestation of the sons of God? Some have conceived that the brute creation is at least included, if not chiefly intended; and they tell us that this passage "is a large field for a philosophic mind." So Mr. Toplady conceived; and bishop Jewell, I have been informed, hath sometimes pleased himself with the thoughts of seeing an old favourite mare of his in some large field, in the millenium, when this wonderful manifestation shall be made; and which they found upon these words - "for we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." But this cannot be the sense of the apostle, because God's voice in the gospel is to the sons of men, not beasts; nor are irrational creatures capable of hope, consequently utterly incapable of an earnest expectation of this manifestation of the sons of God; for a creature can never expect what it knows nothing about.

Nor can fallen angels be either intended or included; for there is no mediator in their nature, nor offer of mercy made to them, and of course there is for them no place of repentance: and, as no promise of life and salvation is held forth to them, there can be no ground of hope for it, and therefore no expectation of this manifestation of the sons of God is, or can be, found in them.

Nor are all the human race intended by this creature, for there are thousands of them upon earth who are without God, without the scriptures, without Christ, and having no hope in

the world And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hope in him whom they have not known? There can be no real hope or expectation of such a manifestation, where the Almighty hath made no revelation of it.

No, nor are all men that hear the gospel intended; for the gospel is to some "a savour of death unto death," and is preached for a witness against them. And, if such have a hope, it is only "the hope of the hypocrites" which God says shall perish, Job, viii. 13. So that, if such sinners are in expectation of this manifestation of the sons of God, it is all in vain, for such will have no part in it, for "the expectation of the wicked shall perish," Prov. x. 28. Nor do the wicked expect it, for "the expectation of the wicked is wrath," Prov. xi. 23. Whereas the expectation (of this creature) shall not be cut off, for it shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

Nor can it be said of all who are in a profession, no, nor of very few of them, that they are in earnest expectation of this manifestation of the sons of God; too, too many "put far away the evil day;" such expect not a deliverance, but an evil day, instead of a deliverance from the bondage of corruption. The foolish virgins who slept, and the hypocrites in Zion who were afraid and seized with fearfulness, were in no earnest expectation of his glorious manifestation.

Some are inclined to think that the Gentiles excluding the Jews is this creature who is in this earnest expectation; but that cannot be, because the great apostle includes himself in the context, who was a Jew. "But we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father; the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and, if children, the heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this

present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestations of the sons of God," verses 15-19. Hence it is plain that Paul does not mean the Gentiles only by this creature, because himself was a Jew; nor doth he mean the Jews only, because he is writing to the Gentiles.

Once more. Whoever or whatever this creature may be, sure I am that three things must be found in it. First, it must have a promise of deliverance from the bondage of corruption, as a ground for its hope, and a warrant for his expectation; for hope stands on a promise, "Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope;" but none but be-lievers are heirs of promise.

2. This creature must have a good hope through grace, for the hope of unjust men perisheth: whereas this "creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God;" hence Christ must be in this creature the hope of glory, because this creature hath hope in his death, and "shall be delivered," saith my text, therefore he shall not be disappointed of his hope.

Moreover, the expectation of this creature is a grace of the Spirit, which is never found in a wicked man, but the contrary, for "the expectation of the wicked is wrath," Prov. x. 28; xi. 7. But the expectation of this creature is of God, and he is one that fears God—"Let not thine heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long; for surely there is an end [a reward], and thine expectation shall not be cut off," Prov. xxiii. 17, 18. Hence it is plain that the reward of this creature is glory, and his expectation shall not be cut off; for he "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

But still the great question is, who this creature is? and I conclude that it is every real believer in Christ Jesus; for "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. Whatever hopes or expectations may be found in others, or whatever birth-privileges they may trust in, or whatever legal works may be performed by them, it will all at last come to nothing - "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," Gal. v. 6. Every new creature in Christ Jesus is in expectation of this manifestation of the sons of God, and shall undoubtedly be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

Again, this creature is the whole body of God's elect, Jews and Gentiles; it is collectively the Lord's whole mystical body, called a man. "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace," Eph. ii. 15. This new man is the general assembly and church of the first-born, consisting of all the elect of God, which are one fold under one shepherd; or, in Christ Jesus, one new man: as it is written, "And he gave some apostles, &c. for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ," Eph. iv. 12, 13, 14. Here the whole church is called the body of Christ, many new creatures or members, but only one new man or body, a perfect man in Christ, or Christ's mystical body. Now ye are the body of Christ collectively, and members in particular.

"The earnest expectation of this creature waiteth, &c." That which exciteth and encourageth this earnest expectation, is the truth and faithfulness of God which hath promised this deliverance, and he will perform it; the death of Christ, also, which hath secured it, and made it sure to all the seed; the Spirit of God is an earnest of it, he has revealed it to us,

raised us to hope for it, and to expect it. And the body of sin and death which burdens us, the world which hates us, the devil who buffets us, the infirmities that compass us about, bodily afflictions which weigh us down, short-lived joys and long desertions, makes us long to be unclothed, to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven," 2 Cor. v. 1, 2. These groaners are parts of this creature in my text. which earnestly expect the manifestation of the sons of God.

But what is this manifestation of sonship? Are not believers the sons of God [manifestly so], by faith in Christ Jesus? Yes, for he that believes hath the witness in himself, and that witness is true, and is no lie; and he doth, as the spirit of adoption, cry, Abba, Father, in all believers; and where this witness and this cry is, sonship is manifested there already, and he is enabled to claim it, though the poor weakling in faith and babe in grace may not; but this is not the manifestation meant in my text, for this manifestation of sonship is more or less in all believers now.

The manifestation of this sonship is something future, something in hope and expectation, which is always something to come; "for what a man seeth [himself in possession of] why doth he yet hope for?" and what a man hath already got, why doth he yet expect? "Now are we the sons of God," this is already manifested; "but it doth not yet appear what we shall be," this is yet to come; "but we know that when he appeareth we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is;" this is the manifestation that this creature so earnestly expects.

When Christ was in the world he was viewed and embraced as the only begotten Son of God by his own elect; but the world viewed him as a deceiver, a madman, and as Beelzebub: but all this dishonour must be wiped away, to the confusion of his foes and the glory, of his own majesty; and, when this is done, our adoption will appear before our enemies as his divine sonship shall appear before his, and this shall be done when we are all made perfect in one God, Father, Son, and Spirit; and then the world shall see, and believe too, as devils believe and tremble: yea, the Arian, Sabellian, Socinian, Atheist, Deist, Jew, and Infidel, for so it is written, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me," John, xvii. 21. When this end arrives there will be no more controversy about the mystery of godliness; Christ will appear the just God and the Saviour in all his glorious majesty, and the saints in all their glory; devils in all their villany, and Christ's enemies in all their confusion, shame, and everlasting contempt. Christ told the Jews, "When ye have lifted up the son of man, then ye shall know I am;" but he gave them not an honest heart to confess it, but left them to sin with open eyes, that they might drown them-selves in the great transgression.

Furthermore, As Christ was, so are we in this world. We are deemed fools, impostors, madmen, false prophets, deceivers, the filth and offscouring of the earth, and are treated accordingly; but our sonship shall be as fully manifested to the wicked, in the day of judgment, as it is to us now. "All that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed;" for there shall be a conspicuous manifestation both of the sons of God and of the children of the devil; for the one shall appear in the image of Christ, and God shall despise the image of the other; goats and sheep shall be separated, the goats shall acknowledge the sheep, and the sheep shall see the goats.

"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, out by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope," Rom. viii. 20. Whatever this vanity is that this creature is made subject to, it is something disagreeable to it, for it is made subject to it not willingly. Sin and the pleasures of it are vanity, which man is not unwilling to the pursuit of, nor can any thing but a divine power displayed incline his will to choose the better part, But it may be objected, that a new creature in Christ is delivered from all this. To which I answer, there is in him the flesh that loves the law of sin, and a lusting at times after evil things; yea, and at times a willingness to them, though the fear of God awes him, and the Spirit assists him in mortification and self-denial; yet, if the deeds of the body are mortified through the Spirit, it is plain that mortification is a crossing and disappointing the will of the flesh, and self-denial is nothing else but a refusing to gratify self. Neither of these things appear to me to be the vanity to which this creature is unwillingly subject.

Again, Vanity is written upon man himself, and upon every thing beneath the sun, for, "all is vanity," all is light, transient, dissatisfactory, unsubstantial, disappointing, and grievous; it is vanity and vexation of soul; but to this vanity the creature is not by nature unwillingly subject, no not the creature in my text. The enjoyment of a wife and family, riches, honour, pleasure, apparel, and many other things in this life, he can find, at times, that member of the old man, called inordinate affections, going out after these, which cost him many a stripe, and many a groan.

In short, the vanity to which the creature is unwillingly subject, is death. "The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is

vanity. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool," Eccl. ii. 14, 15. To this vanity the creature is subjected, but not willingly.

And when was this creature made subject to this vanity? Answer, it was done in paradise, where Jehovah said, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." There is in nature an unwillingness to this, for death, abstractedly considered, hath nothing pleasing in it; for, though the heaven-born soul may long for it in order to obtain the full enjoyment of Christ, the soul being armed against the second death, yet the flesh is weak, the body hath no armour, the weakest part must go to the wall. Besides, grievous pains, languid spirits, increasing infirmities, dying agonies, weeping friends, and leaving poor fatherless children behind in a miserable sinful world, are things in themselves not pleasing to nature. He is subjected to this vanity unwillingly, and no wonder, when the human nature of Christ, at the approach of death, "began to be exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and sore amazed."

But God hath subjected the creature to this vanity in hope; for, at the same time that he said, "To dust thou shalt return," he raised them to hope by a promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head;" and, as Paul says, "Christ destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered them who through the fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage." Here is death, and bondage through the fear of it, to which the creature is unwillingly subject.

But the creature is subjected in hope of a resurrection through Christ; for God begot the apostles again to a lively hope by it; and the ultimate end of Paul's hope was to attain to the resurrection of the dead. For, though he wanted to depart and be with Christ, and to be unclothed, or stripped of the mortal body, yet he had something in view beyond that: "Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon with our house

which is from above, that mortality may be swallowed up of life, when this mortal body shall have put on immortality. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death;" and then, "O grave, where is thy victory? I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death."

To the full and eternal enjoyment of this glory, God hath subjected this creature in hope. Christ's flesh rested in hope, because it was not to see corruption; and ours shall rest in hope also.

"Because the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." By the entrance of sin into the world all flesh hath corrupted its way; and, although by grace through faith in Christ we have "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," yet the new-born soul is sadly annoyed by the corruption of depraved nature; and, as for the body, it is nothing else but corruption, and is subjected, bound over, and doomed to death, putrefaction, and corruption; and shall decay, rot, and turn to dust. It is sown in corruption, and shall corrupt; it is sown in dishonour, reaping the rewards of its sin; it is sown in weakness, unable to resist the king of terrors, or its doom to dust; it is sown a natural body, and has nothing spiritual in it when it is sown. But this bondage of corruption shall be broken off; for he "shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself," Philip. iii. 21. Then shall the body be raised in incorruption, in glory, in power, and a spiritual body, like that of the second Adam, for we shall be like him, and see him as he is; for he that is perfect (in this sense) shall be as his master; that is, he shall awake in his likeness and be satisfied therewith. "Thou which hast shewed me great and sore troubles shalt quicken me again, and bring me tip again from the depths of the earth; thou shalt increase my greatness, and

comfort me on every side," Psalm lxxi. 20. When this work is performed, then shall the adoption of sons be manifested, even to the body as well as to the soul; and it shall be manifested to the wicked also, for they shall see it; for of all that is given to Christ, he will lose nothing, but will raise it up at the last day, and present them all to the Father, with a "Behold me, and the children which thou hast given me." These are the many sons that shall be brought to glory. Moreover, the manifestation of the sons of God in this life is in faith, in hope, and in evidence and witness; and even that not fully, for we know but in part, it doth not yet appear what we shall be, we only look through a glass darkly, and not face to face. Again, though it is manifested to the believer himself, yet not to others, and especially to the wicked. But we are to return from the grave, and to see clearly the difference between the righteous and the wicked, and between him that serveth God and he that serveth him not: and this shall be done when the earth shall be burnt up, when the day shall come that burneth as an oven, the day in which God makes up his jewels, Mal. iii. 17, 18.

That this is what the apostle had in view is plain from what follows, and that he includes himself in this hope is more evident. "We which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption; to wit, the redemption of our body." Here the adoption longed for and expected is the redemption of the body, which is promised to hope, and which hope expects; though we do not now see it as yet performed, yet it shall be performed, for Christ is the Saviour of the body, and this salvation (or deliverance) shall be revealed in the last times, I Peter, i. 5. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it," Rom. viii. 24, 25.

That which makes this text appear so ambiguous, is the apostle's digression from his subject. The apostle had been dropping some hints about the great suffering of the saints; first under a spirit of bondage, which was now removed from them. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, &c." Again, "If so be that we suffer with Christ, we shall be also glorified together." Once more. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Our sufferings are but for a moment, but glory is eternal; God accounts us worthy of the kingdom for which we suffer. But what is all our sorrowful sufferings when compared to the joys and pleasure of that glorious kingdom. Our afflictions are light, but they work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And now the apostle for a moment digresses from his subject, which has occasioned many to wander from the sense: and it is as though he would say, Do not you think that all the sufferings of this world, as the dreadful effects of sin, are fallen upon us. No, no; man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; destruction and misery, afflictions, trouble, bondage, and death, attend upon all, more or less. All groaning and travailing doth not light upon us so as to exclude the wicked: no, nor even are they excluded who persecute us; "for we know that the whole creation [every creature] groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." And now the apostle reassumes his subject again, saying, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption; to wit, the redemption of our bodies." And by this last passage he explains and confirms what he set out upon: namely, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the certainty of our bodies being quickened as well as his; for his resurrection is a pledge and earnest of ours; and the same spirit that quickened Christ (for he was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit) shall quicken us also, for it is from this the apostle argues. "But if the spirit of him that raised up

Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." This is what the creature hath in hope and expectation, to be clothed with glory and immortality, and that death and mortality may be swallowed up of life. And to this end Christ will still hold his regal sceptre, until he hath "put down all rule, all authority, and all power, for the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death;" at the destruction of this enemy that saying shall be brought to pass that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory ;" then the top-stone shall be brought forth with shouting, crying, Grace, grace unto it.

William Huntington