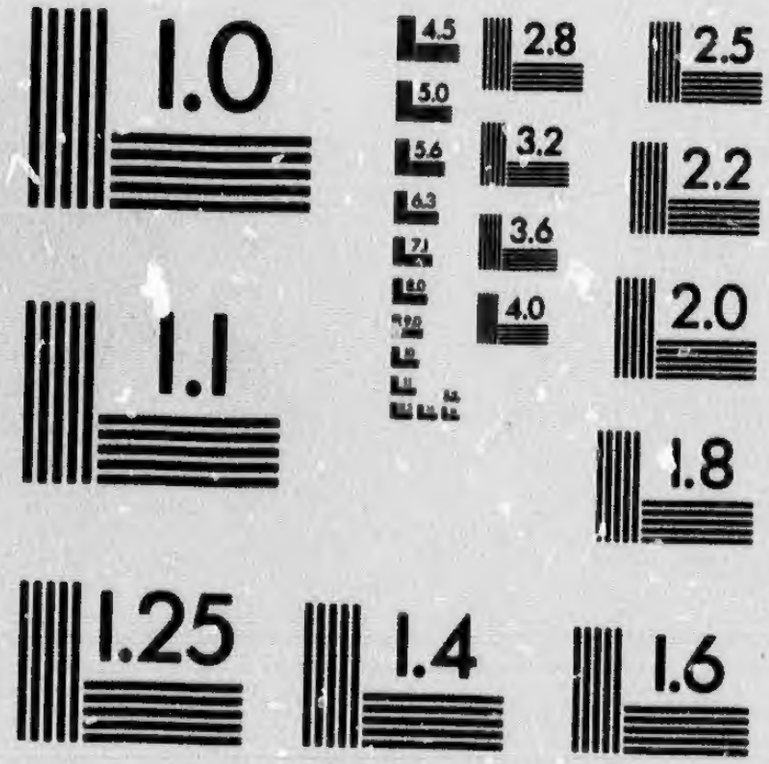
MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

SAINT JOHN,

BEFORE THE SAINT JOHN'S AND UNION LODGES OF FREE AND ACCEPTED ANCIENT MASONS.

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST,

1819;

Saint John
RA/..252./Bur.....
c.1
Regional Library, N.B.
Régional

WHEN A COLLECTION WAS MADE FOR THE POOR OF THE PARISH IN GENERAL.

By GEORGE BURNS, D. D.

CLERGYMAN OF THE NATIONAL ESTABLISHED CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, AND MINISTER OF ST. ANDREW'S IN THE CITY OF SAINT JOHN, NEW-BRUNSWICK.

[The profits arising from the sale of this Discourse are to be applied to the charitable purposes for which the Collection was made.]

SAINT JOHN:

PRINTED BY HENRY CHUBB, PRINCE WILLIAM-STREET.

1820.

To the Masters, Wardens, and Brethren of the St. John's, and Union Lodges, held in the City of Saint John,

This Sermon

Preached before them and Published at their request, is respectfully inscribed by

The Author.

A SERMON.

2 PETER I. 5, 7—"Giving all diligence, add to—Godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.

THE wiſdom of GOD is conſpicuouſly diſplayed, in the adaptation of our moral powers and capacities, to the relations which we are called to ſuſtain. In the moral conſtitution of man, a foundation is laid for all the diverſified duties and enjoyments which the ſocial union neceſſarily involves. Were he deſtined to be a ſolitary animal, ſhunning by inſtinctive influence the haunts of his fellow creatures, and brooding over his own ſorrows, without a friend to alleviate their preſſure, we might expect that his original conſtitution would accord with his actual deſtiny. But "man was born in ſociety, and there he remains."* In whatever degrees of civilization human beings are found to exiſt, they are ever obſerved to aſſociate. An inviſible, but powerful link, connects mind with mind, and man with man. Indeed, it is as obvious as any thing of the kind can be, that had not this been the caſe in every age and country, the ſpecies muſt long ago have ceaſed to exiſt. Viewing, then, the fact as it is, that man does actually exiſt in a ſocial ſtate—it is intereſting and pleaſing to mark the wiſe arrangement which has accommodated his native capacities to his actual condition. Whence the parental and filial affections which expand the ſoul with an ardour and energy inextinguiſhable? Whence the high emotions of delight with which the

* Monteſqieu.

the eye lingers on the countenance of a relative or friend whom abſence has endeared to us? Whence the pleaſing ſenſations with which the interchange of kind attentions dilates the domeſtic circle? "Sadneſs and melancholy are connected with ſolitude; gladneſs and pleaſure with the concourſe of men. The track of a Laplander on the ſnowy ſhore, gives joy to the lonely mariner; and the mute ſigns of cordiality and kindneſs which are made to him, awaken the memory of pleaſures which he felt in ſociety."* All theſe ſentiments and feelings may be traced to an original capacity for the relations in which we are actually placed. In this connection alſo, we may take into view the foundation which has been laid by our beneficent Creator for ſome of the pureſt gratifications which can enter the human breaſt; I mean, the pleaſures which reſult from the active charities of life.

The author of Revelation has with admirable ſkill accommodated his injunctions to the place which man occupies on the ſurface of the globe. There is, perhaps, no claſs of duties more frequently or more earneſtly inculcated than thoſe which ſpring from our ſocial relations. It is not by any means my deſign to inſinuate that the intereſting and ſublime attitude which man aſſumes as the creature of God and the heir of immortality, is overlooked. On the contrary, the relations in which we ſtand immediately to God, and the obligations thence ariſing, are made the foundation of all relative duties. They are never kept out of view in the ſyſtem of Chriſtian morals, and their influence is felt more or leſs throughout the whole detail of ſcriptural inſtruction. Love to God is elevated to the rank of a firſt principle in the Chriſtian character, and that morality is denounced hollow-hearted and ſuperficial, which reſts not on the ſtable baſis of Chriſtian truth. But while our higher and nobler relations are thus unequivocally and habitually recogniſed, it is a certain fact that the duties involved in the ſocial connections of man, hold a moſt conſpicuous place in the great ſcheme of Chriſtian

* Dr. Adam Ferguson.

Chriſtian morals. Hence the frequency and earneſtneſs with which our Saviour inculcates on his diſciples the obligation of mutual affection and brotherly kindneſs. Hence the exalted terms in which the duty of almſgiving is uniformly deſcribed. Hence the ennobling pre-eminence allotted to thoſe who have conſecrated their talents to the purpoſes of beneficence, and who by their efforts have contributed to augment the ſum of human happineſs. Hence alſo, the impreſſive admonition of the Apoſtle in my text, "Giving all diligence, add to your—godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs; and to brotherly kindneſs, charity." Before proceeding to recommend and enforce this admonition, I may ſimply obſerve that the "godlineſs" which is mentioned by the Apoſtle, conſiſts of all thoſe holy affections and diſpoſitions which conſtitute the ſpiritual worſhipper and truly devoted ſervant of GOD—that the "brotherly kindneſs" which he enjoins as the genuine effect of ſound religious principle is an unfeigned fervent love of Chriſtians, as brethren in the LORD—and that the "charity" which he recommends in addition to both, is not that ſentimental ſpecies which is expended in mere wiſhes and feelings, or in occaſional donations to the poor, but that active kind which ſeeks out its appropriate objects; which takes a cloſe and accurate inſpection of human life as it is; which deviſes ſchemes for doing good; which accounts no ſacrifices too great, and no exertions too ſevere, in the proſecution of its godlike operations.

I propoſe to recommend and enforce the practical exerciſe of brotherly kindneſs and charity, by viewing its influence on our *benevolent affections—our views of human nature—our eſtimate of the truth and value of real religion*—and our *individual happiness*.

1. The exerciſe of brotherly kindneſs and charity regulates and ſtrengthens the benevolent affections.—Amid the ruins of the fall, it is pleaſing to trace ſome remaining veſtiges of our former grandeur. Alienated as man is from GOD in the temper of his mind, and in his habitual conduct, he is not altogether inſenſible to the claims of

ſocial

ſocial attachment and reciprocal affection. Strong as is the influence of ſelfiſhneſs in regulating human action, there can hardly be a doubt that benevolence in the common acceptation of the term, is characteriſtic of human nature.

But in the hands of ſuch a creature as man, the moſt amiable natural qualities are extremely liable to be corrupted or reſtrained in their exerciſe. This is peculiarly the caſe with our benevolent affections. Miſtaking the mere animal emotion of good nature for the ennobling principle of brotherly kindneſs; ignorant of the world or viewing it through a diſtorted medium; permitting the more generous qualities of our minds to be perverted by the influence of ſelfiſhneſs or ambition—it is not unuſual to find the benevolent affections contracted within the dimenſions of a ſentimental feeling, unintereſting in itſelf and inefficient in its operation. Many there are, who by an inſtinctive feeling which they cannot repreſs, weep at the tale of woe—who heave the commiſerating ſigh at fictitious repreſentations of diſtreſs—and whoſe ſouls expand with joy when they hear of the proſperity of their brethren: but with theſe emotions and theſe expreſſions of emotion, their brotherly kindneſs and charity completely evaporate. Their benevolence is rather a feeling than a principle—a feeling to be cheriſhed as a ſource of pleaſure, rather than as an operative principle leading to active exertions for the general good. This ſpeculative benevolence as we may term it, is extremely capricious in its modes of operation. It is excited not ſo much by ſcenes of real diſtreſs exhibited to its view, as by the deſcriptions of ſuch ſcenes pictured to the imagination. It ſhrinks from the haunts of ſqualid wretchedneſs—the cold, gloomy cell—the bed of ſtraw. It is not regulated by ſound judgment, nor controled by the agency of right religious principle.

In order to prevent one of the nobleſt affections of our nature from thus degenerating into a mere animal emotion, habits of brotherly kindneſs and charity may be

ſafely

safely recommended. Instead of viewing the principle of benevolence as a merely sentimental feeling to be cherished by abstract reflection, and inflamed by fanciful representations of human nature, let it be brought forth into public life; let it come into contact with things as they are; and let its influence be exerted to relieve actual misery. Seeking for its objects with impartiality and care; weighing with nice discrimination opposite or interfering claims; marking with accuracy the endless diversities of aspect which the human character and condition assume; proportioning its effects to its means, and guarding against the danger of allowing the feelings of the moment to gain the ascendency over the solid decisions of the judgment—the emotion of benevolence will be transformed into a rational, regular, and habitually operative principle. It will no longer be liable to counteraction from the state of the animal spirits, nor will it vary with the varying humours of the mind. At the same time, however, it ought not to be forgotten that the beneficence which produces these effects must itself be regulated by principle. A connection must be established between the natural feelings of the human mind and the powerfully constraining influence of moral and religious truth. To *godliness* must be added brotherly kindness and charity. Native benevolence must be ingrafted on the root of Christian principle. In this way it will be refined and purified and regulated. Thus will love to God and man be exhibited in their just connections, and thus will we imitate him "who went about doing good."

II. Habits of brotherly kindness and charity enable us to form just views of human nature.—There are few subjects concerning which more erroneous sentiments are entertained than the moral state and character of man. For this, it is by no means difficult to account. The mind, it has been observed, like the eye, while it sees every other object, cannot see itself. Men are so completely occupied with external concerns, matters in which interest and ambition find gratification, that they overlook themselves

and

and the moral qualities of which their nature partakes. Beſides, the feeling of pride and ſelf complacence ſo deeply rooted in the heart, and extending its influence over the whole of the moral frame, leads us to form high conceptions of ourſelves, and to overlook the defects which unqueſtionably adhere to us. Even the principle of benevolence, amiable and excellent as it is, has a tendency to miſlead us in our eſtimates of human nature. Wiſhing well to the human race, the tranſition to thinking well of it, is natural and eaſy. We cannot bring ourſelves to believe that man is ſuch a weak, depraved, and wretched creature as he is ſometimes repreſented. We diſcover, or think we diſcover in him certain amiable qualities, theſe we eaſily confound with moral excellencies, and thus form to ourſelves a picture pleaſing and faſcinating to the imagination. The error is increaſed by the habit of viewing the world through the deceitful medium of our own prepoſſeſſions, or in the pictures which fancy has conſtructed for our uſe. Such erroneous views of human nature, while they afford a momentary pleaſure to the mind, are eventually productive of the moſt baneful effects. They tend to keep us in profound ignorance of our own hearts, and conſequently prevent us from ſeeing and feeling our own wants, or from ſeeking to have them ſupplied. They nouriſh the ſeeds of pride and vain glory, and other diſpoſitions far remote from the genuine ſpirit of true religion.

Habits of brotherly kindneſs and charity are peculiarly well fitted to correct our views of human nature. In the retirement of ſolitude, contemplating human life and its affairs at a diſtance, and influenced by our own private wiſhes and feelings, we form to ourſelves the idea of a being naturally pure in his affections, elevated in his views, and enjoying all the felicity of which he is capable. But let us come forth into the world and contemplate the aſpect which it actually exhibits. Let us enter the cell of the priſoner, and the cottage of the poor. Let us approach the couch of ſickneſs and of death. With the

heaven

heaven-born feelings of benevolence let us fympathife with the folitary mourner, lay ourfelves open to the influence of thofe thoufand ills which wring the foul to anguifh, and liften to the heart-rending cry of penury and wretchednefs. Advancing in the career of beneficence, fcenes will prefent themfelves to the compaffionate eye which in oppofition to our former prepoffeffions can hardly fail to fober our conceptions of things. Poverty and diftrefs feen through the veil of a moral painting may be inveſted even with charms. But furvey them in actual life and a very different impreffion is produced. What a variety of fhades does the principle of corruption in man aſſume! What a mafs of mifery does human life prefent to our view! The obvious tendency of fuch practical furveys of human life is to check the emotions of pride, and to cherifh the principle of humility in the wideft fenfe of the term.

Habits of brotherly kindnefs and charity have alſo a tendency to enlarge our knowledge of human nature inaſmuch as they lead us to obſerve man in a variety of fituations; to mark the diverſities of the human character, the influence which external condition has on the heart, and the impreffion which deeds of beneficence make on different minds. The diſcoveries thus made may be practically applied to the improvement of our own hearts. They may be inſtrumental in weakening our attachment to preſent objects, in elevating our minds to thofe which are ſpiritual and divine, and in leading forward our views to that ſtate where evil both natural and moral ſhall be for ever unknown.

III. The exercife of brotherly kindnefs and charity furniſhes a practical evidence of the truth and value of real religion.—In every age of the Church, much evil has refulted from the tendency which men uniformly diſcover to form too ſpeculative and abſtract views of religious truth. That religion, like every other ſubject of intellectual inquiry, admits of ſyſtematic arrangement, and may be preſented to the mind in its juſt relations, is unqueſtionable.

onable. But in forming our views of religion, there is a danger of no trifling magnitude againſt which it becomes us to be ſpecially on our guard. While the great majority of human purſuits have little connection with the heart of man or his conduct in life, it is the profeſſed and leading deſign of religion to control the will and regulate the conduct. Now, ſpeculations on the theory or abſtract ſyſtem of religion, have a natural tendency to induce a forgetfulneſs of this great fact, and to make us loſe ſight of the grand concern which each of us has, in the ſublime realities of religion. We view the intereſting doctrines of chriſtianity merely as parts of a theological ſyſtem, and attend not to the practical reſults which they are intended to produce in actual life.

Habits of beneficence while they enable us to form proper conceptions of the actual character and ſtate of man, enable us alſo to ſee the admirable adaptation of the Goſpel to his natural condition. Long did philoſophy brood over the miſeries of her children, and long did ſhe amuſe herſelf in deviſing ſchemes for their relief. In the religion of Jesus we find what all "the wiſdom of the world" could never diſcloſe,—a remedy for all the diſeaſes of our nature, a balm for the bleeding heart, a ſubſtitute for the want of human comforts, a pillow for the bed of death. Its treaſures enrich the cottage of the poor. Its vivifying energy communicates new life to the decrepitude of age. Its conſolations ſupport the fainting ſpirit when ſurrounding objects can no longer charm. Its hopes irradiate the vale of death.

The ſolitary inquirer may form juſt, and accurate, and ſcriptural views of religion. He may trace with correctneſs its leading features, and mark its diſcriminate excellencies. He may compare it with what he knows of the actual condition of man, and deſcry the traces of divine wiſdom which it diſplays. But it is the man of active benevolence alone who brings it to the teſt of experiment, who ſees it in actual uſe, and witneſſes its practical application. He diſcovers the influence of real religion elevating

ting the mind to a ſublime ſpirituality, communicating the moſt enlarged views of the divine character and Providence, giving ſtrength to ſupport amid the moſt diſtreſſing viciſſitudes, and calming the breaſt which throbs with the anguiſh of guilt. Religion in fact operates a moſt beneficial change even on the *intellectual* condition of man. It ſtrengthens his faculties. It enlarges his conceptions. It gives him clear ideas on the moſt ſublime ſubjects which can engage the mind of man. It ſupplies the want of outward comforts, while it expands the ſoul with anticipations of future bliſs. Even to the moſt wretched of our ſpecies, it points to a ſource of joy ever acceſſible. It furniſhes objects on which the mind may dwell with ſatisfaction. It diſpels the gloom which encompaſſes ſurrounding objects, and leads forward to that world of light, where "we ſhall ſee face to face, and know even as we are known." It is in its application to ſuch exigencies that the ſuperior excellence of religion is beſt perceived. We *know* independently of experiment and fact, that religion is the moſt excellent thing and a ſource of the pureſt joy, but in the caſe of its alleviating actual ſuffering, we *ſee* that it is ſo. An argument is furniſhed which comes home to every mind, and operates with a force which we may reſiſt, but cannot overcome. The triumphs of divine grace are diſplayed and chriſtianity is found to be indeed the friend of man.

IV. The exerciſe of brotherly kindneſs and charity is highly conducive to the happineſs of man.—When we "rejoice with thoſe who rejoice," we participate in their felicity; nay, when we viſit the houſe of mourning, to "weep with thoſe who weep," to ſoften the pillow on which the hoary head of age reclines, and to cauſe "the widow's heart to ſing for joy," we cheriſh a tender pleaſure, and ſhare in thoſe conſolations which we impart to others. Benevolence, indeed, is ſo agreeable to the common notions of mankind, that every one condemns the mean and ſordid ſpirit of that wretch whom God has bleſt with abundance and conſequently with the means of bleſ-

ſing

fing others, who is yet relentleſs to the cries of the deſtitute; who is ever amaſſing riches, but never beſtowing them; whoſe ſoul the good of himſelf entirely engroſſes. True benevolence, extenſive as the light of the ſun, takes in all mankind. It is not indeed in your power to ſupport all the indigent, incurable and aged; or to train up in the paths of virtue many fatherleſs children, but if from a principle of true godlineſs, you cheriſh each generous and liberal movement of the ſoul, with a head ever ſtudious to contrive, a heart ever willing to promote, and hands ever ready to diſtribute to the neceſſities of others, the deeds of charity which you were denied the means of performing ſhall be placed to your account. To graſp thus the whole ſyſtem of reaſonable beings with an overflowing love, is to poſſeſs the greateſt of all earthly enjoyments, to make approaches to the happineſs of higher natures, and to anticipate the joys of the future world. "Bleſſed is he who conſidereth the caſe of the poor." "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the LORD." The riches which from chriſtian principles we give away, ſhall abide with us forever. The ſame habit of love ſhall accompany us into the world of ſpirits. The bud which hath opened here, will blow into full expanſion above, and beautify the paradiſe in the Heavens.

In addreſſing myſelf to you who are aſſociated together profeſſedly for uſeful and benevolent purpoſes, who carry about with you the Bible as the ſtandard to which you appeal and as the ſource from which you derive your principles of action, who, in fact, openly declare yourſelves to be guided by the pureſt feelings of brotherly kindneſs and charity, I need not employ many arguments to recommend and enforce the admonition of the text. I feel and acknowledge my inability to do juſtice to the ſubject in reference to the occaſion on which we are now aſſembled, from my inadequate information regarding the real principles of the Maſonic Order. I have ſome ſlight acquaintance with its origin, progreſs, and preſent ſtate, in as far as theſe have come into public view. I am aware that it

boaſts

boasts of the higheſt antiquity, that it can rank among the number of its votaries ſome of the greateſt and beſt of men, and that its rules and regulations are wiſe and good. Adopting the languag· of one of the Fraternity, I can ſay with reference to one leading object for which we are now convened that "the Maſon is engaged by bonds to works of beneficence. What others might do from ſentiment or neglect to do from the want of it, he will certainly perform both from ſentiment and principle. All his acts are juſtice; all his feelings mercy. His religion is the worſhip of God; his politicks devotion to his country. He cultivates the moral and ſocial duties, and among theſe Charity is pre-eminent. Charity is the Arch which, expanſive as the Heavens, compoſes the canopy of our Temple, and which reſts on the two main pillars which are *eſtabliſhed in ſtrength*. The Key-ſtone of this Arch is brotherly love, which binds the parts together, and confirms their ſolidity. Love and Charity are the heart and ſoul of Maſonry. They prompt to feeling and to action. It is their province to govern our conduct, and it is our duty to ſubmit to their control; for they are the brighteſt daughters of Heaven."* All that remains for me then, Brethren, is to call you to the exerciſe of thoſe very principles which bind you together, and to the immediate diſplay of thoſe feelings by which you profeſs ever to be actuated. Extend your ſympathy beyond the limits of your own craft. Regard the whole world as one Lodge—view the human race as one family—behold in every fellow creature a Brother—and let your benevolence be as wide in its range as the univerſe of God. Compaſſion is the call of our Father in Heaven to us his children exciting us to relieve the diſtreſſes of our brethren. This is an affection wiſely interwoven in our frame, that whereas abſtracted reaſon is too ſedentary and remiſs a counſellor, we might have a more inſtant and vigorous pleader, urging us on to deeds of charity and "labours of love." As far, indeed, as it is ingrafted, it is mere inſtinct; but when we cultivate and cheriſh

* Maſonic Oration by George H. Richards, Eſq.

cheriſh it till we love mercy, when we dwell on every tender ſentiment that opens the mind and enlarges the heart, then it becomes a virtue. Too many are ready to excuſe themſelves and to ſay that their circumſtances are but juſt eaſy to anſwer the demands of their family, and that, upon the great and the opulent, the whole burden of relieving the indigent ought to fall. But do theſe men indulge themſelves in no expenſes unſuitable to their rank and condition? Imaginary wants are boundleſs, and Charity will never begin if we wait till theſe have an end. Every man, whether rich or poor, is concerned in this ſubject, and he who has little is as much bound to give ſomething out of that little, as he who has more is obliged to give more. When the poor widow threw her one mite into the treaſury ſhe exerciſed a nobler charity than all the rich had done. The ſmalleſt gift may be the greateſt bounty. Put thyſelf then in the room of ſome poor unfriended wretch, beſet perhaps with a large family, broken by misfortune, and pining in poverty, while ſilent grief preys upon his vitals; in ſuch a caſe what would'ſt thou think it reaſonable that thy neighbour ſhould do? That, like the Prieſt and the Levite, he ſhould look on with an eye of indifference, and paſs by on the other ſide; or like the good Samaritan, ſhould pour balm into thy wounded mind? Be thyſelf the judge! and whatſoever thou thinkeſt it reaſonable that thy neighbour ſhould do unto thee, "go thou, and do likewiſe."

Throughout the whole of this diſcourſe I have conſidered brotherly kindneſs and charity in the moſt enlarged ſenſe of the terms, without regard to the particular modes in which they diſplay themſelves in life. It is certain that the objects of beneficence are diverſified in their nature and degrees of importance. I have no heſitation in aſſigning the primary place in the ſcale to that active charity which has for its object the relief of moral and ſpiritual diſtreſſes, and which aims to accompliſh its object by enlarging the means of religious inſtruction for the poor, by diſſeminating the word of life, and by affording the means

of

of religious knowledge to thoſe who dwell in darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death. It thus removes evil by anticipating its approach and preventing its exiſtence.—The next place in the ſcale I would aſſign to that active benevolence which with ingenuity and care applies itſelf to the ſupply of natural defects, reſtores and renders uſeful to ſociety thoſe who if unnoticed would either periſh for want, or become burdens on their brethren, and communicates to the helpleſs the pleaſures of independence and the comforts of induſtrious exertion. The value of this beneficence is much enhanced when it comprehends within the ſphere of its exertions the underſtanding and the heart of man; when it combines its energies for ſupplying bodily defects with correſponding energies for improving the underſtanding and purifying the heart. It thus reſembles the beneficence of JEHOVAH himſelf, who, while he delivers us from dangers and "crowneth us with loving kindneſs and tender mercy," reſcueth our ſouls from deſtruction, and ſaves his people with an everlaſting ſalvation. To thoſe who are traverſing this path of beneficence, I would earneſtly ſay, GOD ſpeed! They are workmen together with GOD, and their record is with him. To the liberal praiſe of every true philanthropiſt they are moſt juſtly entitled. Should it ſo happen that, amid the unaccountable viciſſitudes of preſent things, or through the malice of men, this meed ſhould not be awarded them, nevertheleſs they ſhall not loſe their recompence. Acting from the pure ſpirit and principles of the Goſpel; adding brotherly kindneſs and charity to true godlineſs in the heart; inflamed by love to the SAVIOUR, and diſplaying that love by active efforts in behalf of their neighbours—the teſtimony of a good conſcience ſhall be theirs.—GOD will not be unmindful of their "work of faith and labour of love." Their deeds ſhall be enrolled in the archives of Heaven, and their names ſhall be held "in everlaſting remembrance."