

the preservation of this grace in the soul, God waits to be gracious, and shews his longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; and in my humble opinion, there is no other sense which has any importance attached to it, in which God can be said to exercise patience and forbearance towards men.

SPECIAL GRACE is the fulfilment of those gracious promises which are made to those who seek the Lord, and cleave to him with full purpose of heart. It is the pouring out of God's Spirit on those who turn at the divine reproof, Prov. i. 23; It is Christ's special manifestation of himself to the soul, John xiv. 23. Rev. iii. 20. It consists chiefly of such an exquisite degree of light and love, and the experience of that gospel promise, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love him," that the possessor of it feels he has passed from death unto life, and is translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

It is called special grace, because it is the peculiar privilege of those that seek the Lord with their whole heart; or, in other words, who perform the condition of the promise, agreeable to our Lord's repeated assertion, "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."

It may be objected, that common grace (as stated above) does not agree with the description the Scriptures give us of human depravity. Unconverted men are said to be dead in trespasses and sins? Answer. Independent of this grace, men are spiritually dead, for it is no part of the nature of man, but is a new covenant blessing, and the preservation of it in the soul is independent of, and contrary to the will of man, until the possessor of it is disposed to listen to this "whisper of the Spirit," as Mr. Hall expresses it in his Sermon upon the Death of the Princess Charlotte, page 53.

Again: it is observable, the term *dead* is applied in Scripture to the converted as well as the unconverted, Rom. vi. 2. Ephes. ii. 2. Converted men are said to be dead to sin; which certainly does not always mean that sinful inclinations are annihilated, or

that sin is extinct, but that it does not reign: on the other hand, unconverted men are said to be dead in sin, which, as I humbly conceive, does not mean that they are destitute of grace, but that sin is the reigning principle of the mind. The term *dead*, in the sense we are now using it, seems intended to describe the character rather than the state of men. I therefore conclude, that unconverted men are dead to holiness and to God, in the same sense or degree as converted men are dead to sin and the world; though certainly there are various shades of character among both.

Again: it may be objected, that if special grace is obtained by performing the condition of the promise, then salvation is of works and not of grace? Answer. It is true, no man can do any thing to merit or purchase salvation, but it is equally true that every man has much to do to obtain it. I work to obtain my daily bread, but I do not thereby merit or purchase it at the hand of God.

I am, sir,
Your obedient servant,
A LOVER OF TRUTH.

Leicester, June 3, 1823.

ON NOVEL READING.

MR. EDITOR.

THE other day, on looking over the catalogue of what may be termed a *modern circulating library*, I could not help being very forcibly struck with the multitude of "novels and romances" there registered; and my mind wandered involuntarily from the list of titles, to the probable influence which such a mass of fictitious narrative was calculated to have on the minds of the community; and the evils which were likely to arise to the readers from squandering away

"The fleeting moments of too short a life" in the useless, nay, worse than useless occupation of novel reading. What, I would ask, is the object of the whole of mankind? What is that at which all men aim, from the least even to the greatest,—from the time when reason dawns, until it suffers its final eclipse? Is it not happiness? Each may pursue a different road in order to gain this blessing; but surely there is nothing which tends so much to lead us

from the *direct* path, as perusing such works as present to our view false, and at the same time highly pernicious, because deceitfully coloured, pictures of human life; that stir up in the breasts of the young and thoughtless, passions which may lead perhaps to fatal, though unforeseen consequences; but which, had they not been brought into action by the fevered representations of the novelist, had lain dormant, while the mind would have applied itself to other, and, we may hope, to *better* purposes.

It may, perhaps, be urged, that "it is easy to distinguish truth from fiction, and by that means to reject the latter, while we only pay regard to the former." We grant that it is easy, but at the same time we would inquire of the novel reader, if he ever makes this distinction; and, if not, what avails the ease with which it *may* be done? We generally find that he reads on with eagerness, without once closing the book to examine, or to reflect upon, what he has read, but imbibes the whole with an avidity, and a degree of perseverance, worthy of a better cause.

The mind of man was surely formed for sublimer purposes than to be exercised in reading such useless works, or in wasting its noble energies in recollecting a romance or a fairy tale. In short, when we think of the all-grasping powers of the human mind, we can hardly believe that it would so lower its dignity as to exert itself for nothing, and employ those powers in a labour from which it derives no advantage, and does not raise itself one step higher in an intellectual point of view.

But methinks I hear some one exclaim, "There are certain novels which ought to be excluded from censure; because, while they afford amusement, they communicate knowledge, being by no means destitute of information." We can grant this to a certain, though very, *very* limited degree; for surely no man can learn (and none save persons of very weak minds can be even amused) by the demoniacal frenzies of Lewis, or the wild inconsistencies of Mr. Radcliffe. For what knowledge or information is to be derived from long narratives carried on in a style of the veriest bombast, concerning midnight assassins, mysterious apparitions, and secret passages?

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But setting these aside, for others which popular opinion holds up as the best which were ever penned, viz. the novels of the "Author of Waverley." Who, let us ask, would wade through *these*, even for the sake of instruction or improvement, when in one-tenth of the space, and for one-tenth of the expense, they might obtain from other works, ten times the quantity of sterling knowledge, that would do honour to its possessor. Indeed, when hearing any person (and there are some such in the world) advocating the cause of novel reading, on the score of the information to be derived from it, it always reminds me of the boy who devoured a *large* piece of pudding for the sake of the *few* plums it contained.

That novels are works of amusement, I readily allow; though at the same time I cannot forget that man was not placed on earth merely to amuse himself, but to contribute as much as he can to make himself useful, and to render others happy; and as I am by no means anxious to deprive him of pleasure, so also I would have it to be of a kind, that, if it does no direct good, it should at least do no harm. Persons fond of reading, who find a pleasure therein, and who have no other object in view than that of pleasing themselves while they chase dull care away, may surely find many works to read, as amusing as novels and romances, and at the same time far more instructive, without including any pernicious ingredient.

The literature of no country is so rich in entertaining, yet strictly moral works, as our own, and no man need fly for mental amusement to the pages of the novelist, while we can boast such works as the Spectator, Rambler, or Guardian; works whose value no novel can ever equal. And if even these works seem too dull, if the reader would wander farther into the regions of imagination, and revel in *ideal* scenes, have we not the strains of the poets at our command? poets, whose genius and merit surpass those of every other nation; who place their scenes of action, not with the novelist, in the haunted chamber! but beyond the realms of thought itself; whose minds we can trace in their sublime course,—

"Sailing with supreme dominion
Thro' the azure depths of air."

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Such was immortal Milton, and such the "scarcely less immortal" Young; besides other men, whose names shine in the galaxy of our literary hemisphere. We have also poets whose productions are of a less sublime, though not less improving and entertaining nature; such are the works of Cowper, Thomson, Goldsmith, Pope, and many more, which will live as long as the genius of Britain shall exist, and be the admiration of the world, when the thousands of bombastic novels which our presses pour forth with increasing rapidity every day, shall furnish lining for trunkmakers, or grace the grocer's shelves. Let him, then, whose only object in reading is to amuse himself, or to wile away the tedious hours, turn to such works as our essayists and poets have produced; works which are instructive as well as entertaining,—which soften the heart, while they improve the mind,—which make man better, as well as wiser, and which continually—

"Point him from nature, up to nature's God."

VIEDAS.

"THOUGHTS ON COMBINATIONS" EXAMINED.

MR. EDITOR.

SIR,—From the extensive line of correspondence with which you are favoured, from the cheapness of your publication, as well as from the present eager and unexampled demand for literary information which distinguishes the present era, I am led to conclude that your magazine must have a very general circulation. Permit me, therefore, to offer my opinion upon an article in your last number, (col. 616,) which you term "just remarks on illegal combinations," but which may be very justly termed "a libel on the character of the working classes in general."

I shall not endeavour to clothe these remarks in the dictatorial garb of consequence, for I am only one of that humble class alluded to by the author of this "very interesting essay;" nor shall I urge them on your notice with any angry feeling of resentment towards you, sir, as the editor: the difficulties with which an editor has to contend in many instances, and the choice of articles which he has to insert, and the different palates which he has to please, are a sufficient excuse for many an inadvertent and unintentional error into which he may fall.

It may seem premature in me to enter into an examination of what you acknowledge to be only an extract—upon two isolated paragraphs of an essay—but standing as they do unobtrusively in your pages, they deserve (in my humble opinion) some animadversions to

be made upon them. If a stranger to the laws and usages of this country were to read the first of these paragraphs, he would directly conclude that the working classes of England were a factious assembly of "licentious and intemperate" beings, domineering over the laws, and laughing at the authority of those who have the administration of them; that upon every trivial disagreement, they were convening their tumultuous assemblies, and "estorting" from their employers upon the instant, whatever they pleased,—that the masters were at the beck and call of their journeymen, and had no power to stop their illegal proceedings: but to any person conversant with our daily journals, the very reverse would be the conclusion.

The general character of the working classes of England is neither distinguished for "licentiousness" nor "intemperance;" they are no domineering faction, "sacrificing a sense of duty and deference to the laws, to a brief present gain," nor illegally braving those laws, or setting at defiance the authority of those who are placed over them to administer justice impartially, and to mingle mercy with justice. If in some solitary instance the wretched and mistaken sufferers have so far forgotten their duty towards God and their families, as to attempt an outrage, an armed force is quickly called in, and the musket-ball and bayonet, or the cavalry broad-sword, soon make them repent of their imprudence. They do not "upon every increased demand for any branch of manufacture instantly combine to extort higher wages."—The masters are not in fear of extending their establishments through the illegal combinations of their journeymen.

Has the writer of this essay forgotten that the combination laws are in full force, and always acted upon with severity, if an occasion presents itself? Does he not know, that masters frequently meet and agree to lower the prices of journeymen's wages? and too often, indeed, generally succeed in their attempts. Is this, I would ask, an illegal combination?

Does the law allow a master the exclusive privilege of saying to a journeyman mechanic, Your labour shall be the same, but your wages shall be less, or you shall leave my employ? And will the same law punish a mechanic for turning the tables on his employer at a more convenient season, and asking an advance, in retaliation for the former reduction? Why should not the mechanic have the opportunity allowed him to study the interests of his family, as well as the master to study the interests of his? The labour of the mechanic is his property; and ought he not to be allowed to guard it from the violation of power, and to obtain a fair valuation for it, by the same right that a master has fire-arms upon his premises to deter the midnight robber from his depredations, or to ask of his customers a fair price for the article he is selling to them? Law and reason are sometimes at variance, for we too well know to which of the aforesaid parties the punishment is awarded. If the worm is trod upon, it will turn, but not till it feels the foot of its hard-hearted oppressor crushing its defenceless frame, and trampling upon its vitals.

As to the mere argument held in the second paragraph, it is reasonable enough, and the labouring classes are too well informed at the

present time, not to see that such an attempt on their parts would be productive of the consequences described. But I should wish to know what class or classes of journeymen mechanics are now receiving these enormous wages exacted from their employers. And if instances can be adduced, how has the rustic labourer taken example by their illegal proceedings? For charity's sake, the author of this essay should have left the rustic labourer out of his catalogue, who in many parts of the country is obliged to become dependent in part upon the parish funds, to make up a miserable pittance, hardly sufficient to allow his family to taste animal food once a twelvemonth. But to complete the picture which the imagination of this essay writer has formed, (for it could only be in imagination,) he concludes with a bold and sweeping assertion, as if all he had been commenting upon were facts, and had actually taken place: "Thus, by the destructive spirit of combination, the labouring classes are, without being sensible of it," (poor ignorant creatures!) "engaged in a cruel intestine warfare of exaction, and eagerly employed to distress and impoverish each other."

True it is, Mr. Essayist, there are many instances of trades being depressed and impoverished, but the cause originates not with themselves, but with the machine proprietors. The machine and steam-engine* have driven the industrious mechanic from the factory to the fields, and from the fields to the poorhouse:

* On those branches of this well-written letter, which apply to machinery and steam-engines, the Editor begs leave to make a few remarks. There can be no doubt that machinery in some of its operations will prove injurious to particular classes of the community; but in a national point of view, the advantages more than counterbalance the local inconveniences. It is only by the aid of this powerful substitute for manual labour, that Great Britain has been able to support that preponderating influence, and to command that extensive sale for her manufactures in foreign markets, by which her trade is at present distinguished. And when on a comprehensive scale we take into our account the numerous individuals that are employed in the various departments of commerce by these means, and survey the increased consumption of the manufactured commodity, through the great reduction of the price, it is more than probable that the aggregate amount of individual employment is rather augmented than diminished by the introduction of machines.

Every change, however, is unavoidably productive of some partial disadvantage. The inclosure of waste lands drives the peasant's cow from the common; the use of the plough has reduced the labour of the spade; and the invention of printing turned multitudes of transcribers of manuscripts out of employment: but we cannot hence infer that these are real evils. On a principle of equity, when trade is brisk, and the demand great, both master and men ought to partake of the benefit; and when a depression takes place, the calamity also should be proportionably divided.

where the harsh reproaches and the unfeeling taunts of a parish committee frequently incite him to the commission of crimes, for which his life is the only expiation. Who that has any claim to reason or humanity can forbear pitying the ingenious artisan, who, after having served an apprenticeship to his trade, and from his continued application to one particular branch of manufacture, is unable to turn his hand to every thing or any thing,—is driven from his family and connections, to wander about in search of uncertain and precarious employment? Surely, Mr. Editor, the English artisan is not deserving of that unmerited opprobrium with which the author of the essay in question hath loaded him. If it was in his power to combine for advance of wages, how was it that he slept at his post when the machines were first introduced; when he must have had every opportunity of succeeding, while the engineers were as yet only practising them to bring them to perfection, and while the steam-engine (if I may be allowed the expression,) was only in its infancy? And if it is in his power to combine now, how is it that he is still slumbering, now that he has felt all the baneful effects of their introduction. The English mechanic is not that rude ungovernable creature which he is represented to be; give him a reasonable remuneration for his labour, so that he may be enabled to rear his family in decency, and make his children become honourable and useful members of society, so that he may look forward to the time when they shall prove his solace and his support, when tired nature is verging to her long and last repose,—admit him to an equal claim and share of justice with those who lord it over him, and look upon him (now that he does not need his services) as if they had never been benefited by his exertions,—let the balance be held impartially, when his wealthy and opulent employer shall stand before him at the bar of justice,—give him some security for the present, and some prospect for the future,—and he will wear his bones out in your service without a murmur; he will become a more valuable treasure to his employer, a more honourable member of the community, and a more humble and loyal subject to his King:—but in lieu of this, keep him an imprisoned pauper in the land where his services have been rendered useless, withhold all these privileges from him, and (you may see him now) he broods over his miseries in silence, he sinks into listlessness and apathy, seeing no reward set before him to encourage emulation, or to cherish a hope of better times to come, and awaits with patience the time when his real value shall be estimated as it deserves, and when he shall resume that station in society which he has lost, though not forfeited by his own misconduct.

I fear, sir, I have trespassed on your patience in extending my remarks thus far;—if you deem them worthy of insertion, (which, for the vindication of their characters for whom they were written, I hope you will,) you will have my thanks for your attention.

I remain, sir,
With all possible respect,
J. WRIGHT.

Bermondsey, July 8th, 1833.