

OUR DUTY.

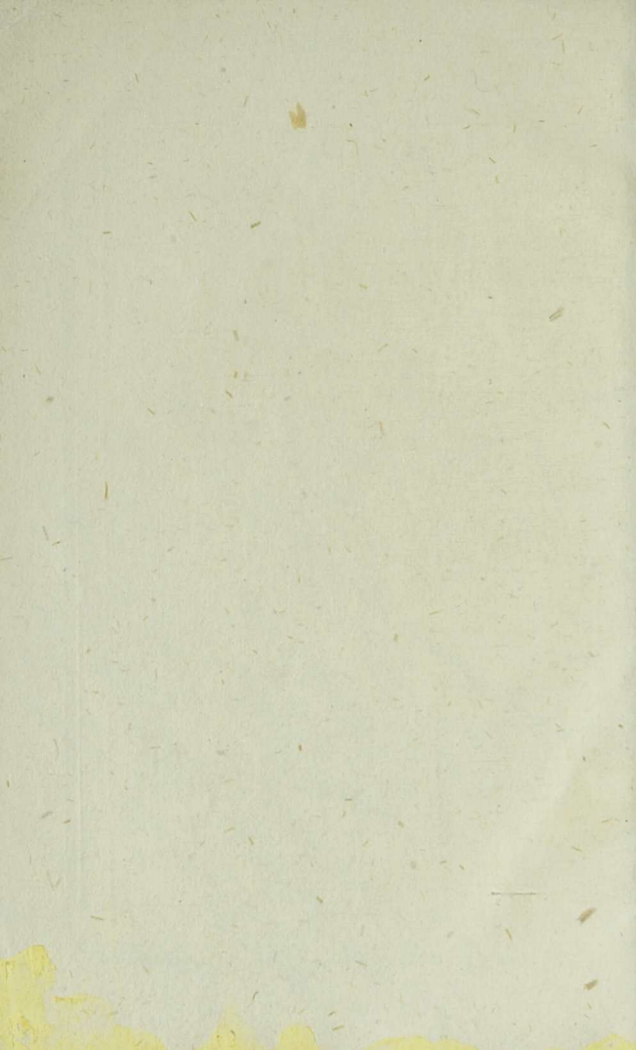
By the Author of

“THE SURE ROAD TO CONTENTMENT.”

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AND

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OUR DUTY.

“OWE NO MAN ANY THING, BUT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.”—ROM. XIII, 8.

THE little word Duty, or what I owe, or what I *ought to do*, is too much overlooked by many, who in imagination are soaring far beyond this apparently humble boundary, of which, however, they little know the extent. To know and to do *our duty*, is a higher thing than most persons imagine.

A very disobedient and troublesome female servant, was at the same time much prone to works of supererogation. She would go to the top of a high hill to gather flowers for her mistress, who was

very fond of them, and she would do many other little things of the same kind ; but when *found fault with for daily omissions of duty*, instead of altering her conduct when reprov'd, she would reply, "I am sure, ma'am, I do everything I can to please you." "No Jane," said her mistress, "you do everything to please yourself."

Jane's mistress was a thoughtful person. Her own conscience was touched with this reproof to her servant, and she considered how often she had, in a similar manner, taken her *own way* to serve God, instead of seeking, in a child-like spirit, to do His will.

It is God's plan to place us each in his own peculiar position, for the express purpose of training us for a higher state of existence ; but very

commonly good men are inclined to shrink from the dry *details of duty*, and to betake themselves to what they imagine a higher, and a more interesting sphere. Busy life and solitude have each their snares ; and the monk and the nun who fly from family duties, to what they consider a life of greater sanctity, find temptations and trials difficult to meet, because they are not of God's appointment. These are extreme cases, but to all who seek to serve God, there is a danger of being tempted out of the true path of *duty*.

But while we cannot, perhaps, accuse ourselves of actually and voluntarily leaving our place, from the idea that in some other situation we could be more useful, do we not sometimes weaken our minds by

sighing over lost opportunities, or by looking forward to still future days of usefulness, in some brighter sphere, instead of considering *the duty of the present moment?*—careful only that the heart be right with God; that the eye, the hand, the tongue, may move under His direction.

“ Present time use faithfully,
Think not what may be to-morrow;
God anew will care for thee,
Should the future bring new sorrow.”

In such a state of mind alone can we fulfil the precept, “Owe no man anything, but to love one another.” Such a state of mind alone separates us from the world. Change of place, change of society will not do it. We may associate ourselves with those who hold the most correct views, we may speak of the world, and of worldly people, with pity, but we

may still have the *selfish spirit* which separates us from the light of God's countenance, and which withholds His blessing from our efforts.

The apostle Paul says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" and we may equally maintain that whatever is not *of love* is sin. Our own way! Our own righteousness! These expressions mean every action, however apparently good it may be, done to *please ourselves*, or merely because we choose to do it. God's righteousness, the righteousness God desires, the righteousness of Christ, He expressed in these words, "Lo I come to do thy will, oh my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." "Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." He may talk of the atonement, but he really knows

nothing of the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin. The blood of Christ has *now* a cleansing power ; He is *now* a life giving Spirit, and “ the fruit of the Spirit is love.”

A christian writer says, “ One thing impressed my own mind most peculiarly, when the Lord was first opening my eyes,—I never found Christ doing a single thing *for Himself*. Here is an immense principle. There was not one act, in all Christ’s life, done to serve or please Himself. An unbroken stream of blessed, perfect, unfailing love flowed from Him, (no matter what the contradiction of sinners,) one amazing and unwavering testimony of love, and sympathy, and help ; but it was ever *others*, and not Himself, that were comforted, and nothing could weary it, nothing turn it aside.

“Now the world’s whole principle is *self*—doing well for *itself*. (Ps. xlix, 18.) Men know that it is upon the energy of selfishness they have to depend. Every one knows this, that knows anything at all of the world. Without it, the world could not go on. What is the world’s honour? *self*. What its wealth? *self*. What is advancement in the world? *self*. They are but so many forms of the same thing; the principle that animates the individual man in each, is the spirit of *self*-seeking. The business of the world is the seeking of *self*, and the pleasures of the world are *selfish* pleasures. They are troublesome pleasures, too; for we cannot escape from a world where God has said, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou

return to the ground," &c. Toil for self is comparatively sweet ; but suppose a man find out at length, that the busy seeking of self is trouble and weariness, and, having procured the means of living without it, gives it up,—what then ? He just adopts another form of the same spirit of self, and turns to *selfish ease*."

It is a serious consideration, that to every human being with whom we come in contact, we owe a debt, and nothing but a loving heart can enable us to pay it. Oh ! how shall I, with a cold, unloving heart, discharge my daily, my hourly debt ? With a cold, unloving heart, it cannot be done ; but let the *dying Christian* tell us how the coldest heart may be warmed.

In the midst of the most agonizing pain, Dr. Payson enjoyed the

most amazing views of the love of his God and Saviour; and after a life devoted to His service, he found a fulfilment of that gracious promise, "The Lord will strengthen him on the bed of languishing; Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." The following is a small portion of his happy experience:—"I can find no words to express my happiness. I seem to be swimming in a river of pleasure, which is carrying me on to the great fountain." Again. "I have done nothing myself: I have not fought, but Christ has fought in me. I have not run, but Christ has carried me. Christ has done all.

"Oh the loving-kindness of God, *His loving-kindness!* This afternoon, while I was meditating upon it, the Lord seemed to pass by, and to

proclaim Himself, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious!' Oh how gracious! Try to conceive of that—His loving-kindness; as if it were not enough to say kindness, but *loving-kindness*. What must be the loving-kindness of God, who is infinite in love."

But to our immediate point. What effect had these blessed views of the love of God, on the feelings of Dr. Payson towards his brethren? "I am," said he, "more and more convinced that the happiness of heaven is a benevolent happiness. In proportion as my joy has increased, I have been filled with intense love to all creatures. I long to measure out a full cup of happiness to everybody."

Now the man who fully enters into that word, "God so loved the world

that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life," is alone in a position to do his duty,—to pay his debt to humanity.

If we wish to *do* good, we must *be* good ; and if we wish *to be good*, we must come to Him who alone can show us the way.

Drink ye of the crystal stream,
Catch from heaven the golden beam ;
Then each frozen heart shall glow.
Learn of Him, the meek and lowly,
Only wise and only holy,
What to every man you owe.

In Christ Jesus we see what we owe to all men, for in Him we see divine love veiled in the human garb, that we may look on it undazzled,—that we may follow it. He washed the feet of His disciples, but He would not allow them to tempt Him

from the path of duty. "Get thee behind me Satan," said He to Peter, when that disciple would have dissuaded Him from going to Jerusalem to suffer. And, again, it was in love that He rebuked the hypocrite and the Pharisee, as it was also in love that He received the penitent sinner. (Luke vii, 36—50.)

Such a love should be manifested by all who call themselves by the name of christian. Where then would be the thoughtless word, the proud look, the unkind deed? To the most troublesome petitioner, to the most wearisome acquaintance, as well as to our dearest friend and benefactor, we owe a debt. If we owe brotherly kindness to a christian brother, we are commanded to add to brotherly kindness, *love*. "I say

unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; *that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven*; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?"

Dear christian reader! let your *daily words and daily actions* be one continued illustration of your love to Jesus.

AN EXAMPLE FOR ALL.

It is related of Philip Melancthon that, "among the many christian virtues that adorned his character, he was highly esteemed for his generosity. Indeed, his friends were astonished at his liberality, and wondered how, with his small means, he could afford to give so much in charity. It appears to have been principally owing to the care and good management of an excellent and faithful servant named John, a native of Sweden. The whole duty of provisioning the family was entrusted to this domestic, whose care, assiduity, and prudence amply justified the unbounded confidence reposed in him. He made the con-

cerns of the family his own, avoiding all needless expenditure, and watching with a jealous eye his master's property. He was also the first instructor of the children during their infancy. John grew old in his master's service, and expired in his home amidst the affectionate regrets of the whole family. During a service of thirty-four years, how much usefulness was effected by this humble individual, and by his master through his instrumentality."

OUR GREAT EXEMPLAR.

O LORD, thy heart with love o'erflow'd,
Love spoke in every breath,
Unwearied love thy life declared,
And triumph'd in thy death.

And thou hast taught thy followers here,
 Their faithfulness to prove,
 And show their fellowship with thee,
 That they each other love.

May we this sacred law fulfil,
 In every act and thought,
 Each angry passion be removed,
 Each selfish thought forgot.

Teach us to help each other, Lord,
 Each other's cross to bear.
 Let each his willing aid afford,
 And feel a brother's care.

Try us, O God, and search the ground
 Of every sinful heart :
 Whate'er of sin in us is found,
 O bid it all depart.

In peacefulness and joy led on
 In the triumphant race,
 Till, meeting round thy radiant throne,
 We're perfected in grace.

Rom. xv, 3 ; *Phil.* ii, 5 ; 1 *Pet.* ii, 21 ;
Eph. v. 2 ; 1 *John* ii, 6.

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