No. 15.
On keeping the heart.
"Enter into the mind of God or man.
May we go, or unappro'd. or leave
No spot or stain behind;" Ethel.

Psa. iv. 23. "Keep the heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life!"

What is it, my soul, to keep the heart? How far may thoughts be governed? And what is the range of that empire wh. man possesses over his mental & moral habitus? It is not that we are able to check the first motions of mind, to exclude the first apprehensions or feelings excited by the objects, ideas, or imagination may present. We have all, doubtless, been placed in circumstances wh. have put it beyond our power to prevent rising emotions;--we may not overcome them, we may bid them depart before they have contracted the familiarity of residence;--but we cannot say to them, "you shall not rest light on our hearts. Can the man of feeling fail to feel, however he may suppress a momentary indignation at insult? Will he..."
lives on the breath of applause, knows no elation of heart, when his ear drinks the voice of flattery? Or is the man of pleasure look on the assembled allurements of temptation, not feel though he may lament, the sudden irregularity of subserviency of desire? Not does the govern-ment of thoughts, always so often, imply the ability to disregard the deep impressions ag-itating excitaments, or some events of life urge home upon us. If pain has laid its grasp upon you, as if you are left to mourn the solitude of the heart or the man of hope, when some fond ties are severed, you would shun the steps of those who should approach and tell you, that all this is no evil, that you may not feel, but to think of it. It is in vain; nature never learned stoicism; pain must be felt, grieved for a moment at least will have may. I know there are instances of moral heroism wh ere the character of man—there are those on whose minds suffering seems unable to imprint as the slightest of its dark lines of sorrow. But this grandest of spirit makes no necessary...
at their origin, while they may yet be moulded into the powerful auxiliaries of virtue. The mental eye must never stumble or be dazzled; it must steadily glance into the springs of action; watch over the workings of motives; it should institute a keen system examination into the qualities of dispositions of desires, penetrate through the veil under the self-deception, sometimes hiding the boundary line between good and evil. Arrogance must not take refuge on the ground of fragility, pride must not be excused because it shines in the borrowed title of greatness of mind. Presumption must not be allowed to claim the name of privileges of innocent enjoyment of lordly generosity. But it is not merely the subsistence of our affections that we have to fear. For all the purposes of morality, some of them may be as deficient as others, are extravagant. They are designed to be the sources of action; nor if we have a particular affection in any given degree, but not in a sufficient degree, to become a spring of action, it becomes useless and respect to all the purposes for which God has given it to us, so that the least adds nothing to our moral merit. A man may love his country as virtue, but not love them well enough to toil & suffer for them; or he may wish well to the poor of the miserable, yet afford them nothing but kind words. He there fore who would keep his heart and be no less prompt to cultivate those affections, or may be weak or defective, than to repress the remembrance of others who are apt to swell into overgrown dimensions. To keep the heart, then, is to keep the balance of virtue, to scrutinise & guide the operation of these elements of our moral character is formed, to manage the tendencies that to produce the conflicts, win the victory of sustained resolution, of conscience.

Let us attend on the 1st place to the assertion in the text, that out of the heart are the issues of life. This is true with respect to our actions, is in a great degree with respect to our opinions, 4 It is true that our actions proceed from the heart, those actions I mean, which may be said to constitute character. The only permanent foundation for conduct is internal principle; for conduct is nothing but the outward expression of what the internal principle suggests it is the language of mind. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring
faith good fruit." This is a truth not every day's observation will teach you; you may see it in the thousand peculiar shapes in virtue and vice assume in different individuals. In the milder modifications virtue displays its varied operations. I do not mean to say that every individual action of men proceeds from the heart, it may be considered the fair criterion of the state of moral soundness within. It is but too true, that the principle of duty, the vigility of conscience are sometimes laid aslack in the freest of best minds. We may be surpris ed into actions not our own in the little occasions of repentance. I will meet the eye in the retrospection of life as the mornful monuments of human frailty, the sad remember cers how much we need the mercy of God; the most severe self-inspection would not require us to make those instances the measure of the actual state of the moral man. On the other hand, vice and impiety know well how to conceal themselves. Nay, means never forgets his arts of policy and cunning; she is always ready to weave a fair covering to hide the most loathsome intentions of the foulest motives. The world sees a gilded surface; asks perhaps no more; but darkness and iniquity are foregone beyond it. But after you have allowed for every exception ask the mildest experience can suggest, it will still remain true that bads of conduct, what may properly be called the life, will receive their character from the character of the heart. As dispositions are elevated or degraded, as principles are firm or decided or faltering or submissive, as affections are pure or contaminated, so will actions be noble or base, energetic or weak, amiable or loathsome or debased. Interest, or pass ion, or sudden temptation may sometimes interrupt this intimate connection; but it will soon resume its hold and display its power. Only the surface of water. If you can no longer see the objects at the bottom, you see them only in broken and mutilated forms; but let the agitation subside, and all that lies beneath is presented to you in clear and unobstructed view.

You need not be told, that it is the glory of sky to have made the government of the thoughts a point of religious duty; so why did the Author...
of our faith, rising superior to all the insufficiency of the external foundations of morality, which seems to have been the work of sophists. Why, but because of his heart? Why, but because of the heart? And if he be not kind to those who have served him, it will soon sink because any other virtue, than the deep, internal virtue of the gospel, is like the picture formed by sunbeams on a cloud, or shadow itself in the absence of light. It was well said by Boethius, "that our favor know mankind better than Socrates," of he who has assured us that "it is of the heart proceeds the crimes and disgrace humanity, and who denounced more on those who hate and beget perdition, more than without but foul in heart, has placed the check in vice, whose alone it can be pleased with permanent efficacy.

But the heart does more than guide actions; it exerts an inconsiderable influence on the formation of our opinions. For there is a mutual connection between the affections of the intellect, the most scanty observation will witness. "Faith is the life blood of errors in the brain, feed the reciprocally, they again, the mind is conduct mutually imprint. Yet stamp their image on each statement." And passions betray, show of sentiment, & corrupt practice becomes the source of false theories. The general principle of the influence of disposition of affection upon thought is manifested in this of facts on language of all expressions of mental operations. The engaged & interested heart even unconscious by reasons deep in the recesses of conversation. Who has failed to notice the difference between the earnest language of passion is that of each irritable reason. The one attempts to enforce ideas on a general mass without selection; the other discriminates marks the distinctions in things apparent

by analogies. The one easily substituting strong impressions for realities; mistakes hypothetical exaggerations for accuracy & fidelity of statement. The other loves to analyse, to separate truth from errors; facts from misrepresentations. The one is always a partisan, pleading a cause, rapidly & collectivily, displaying in glowing colours, every favourable circumstance, of justice by effects of moment regardless of their force; the other is judge comparing, balancing, deciding according to the strength of evidence, undeterred by the small presisions, undeterred by the sympathy of passion. But the most common of obvious influence of the
fections or opinions is exemplified in the pro-
"pensity of man to make his lives of sentiments co-
respond, to justify, by reasoning, what they do,
how or why. How often does the understand-
ing become the apologist of the heart, to use its
ingenuity to defend the great actions of passion.
It is an old observation that we easily believe
what we wish to be true. No man can long
endure the heavy, oppressive struggles of a guilt-
less conscience, or the the grinding sting of self-
proach, if he will not first reform or persuade
himself that he is right; if he perceives no such
less sacrifice to expense & do find an opinion that
to protect a life, he will most probably en-
list his faculties on the side of his desires, &
charge his reason with the task of excusing the
singularities of the guilt of passion. If, as has
been observed, 'a good heart is the best counsel,
& bad one is certainly the worst.' Do not the
infidel & the scoffing sometimes ingeniously
reason themselves out of religion, because they
can find none on which to rest. To actions? Is not the act of the frequently aban-
doned, because it cannot be made the refuge
of impunity, the sanctuary of guilt? The pos-
session of deception is simple & natural. We feel
wise as gathering wisdom, our hearts & Johnson's
strength from every act of consequence. We look
to this & find it unhurriedly forbidding the
criminal indulgence, of requiring the consecrate
al surrender of the strong hold of our passions. We
are therefore glad to believe that this religion
has no claim on our regard, that it was not per-
miutated by divine authority, of that of his Apo-
lis, though teachers of righteousness, were artful
instructors. Not is it in religion alone that this
belief is practised. Look through life, & you will
see passion & feeling, with all their mighty influ-
ence, moulding & guiding the theories of the poli-
tician, the scholar, the artist, & the man of the
world.

It appears, therefore, that the heart is the soul
of action, & that in a great degree, it forms & shapes
our sentiments. The question, then, is natural, and
is important: how may we govern our thoughts?
how shall we "keep the heart"?

1. If you would establish the foundation for a
pure discipline over thoughts & affections, you must make a right choice of the object of life. We are not formed to stand amidst contending motives or opposite impulses, in motionless indifference to them all; to die on the surface of the ocean & take no direction from its waves. Existence must have a purpose; be that pursuit what it may, it will form the central point of our wishes & desires; it will direct & guide us in its own course; our habits of thought & the tendencies of inclination. Our Saviour manifested that he knew man well, when he said: "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Ask the man, who makes it his business to be rich, or who loves happiness but to bask in the sunshine of fortune, ask him who this he finds it difficult to command; the energies of his mind in the pursuit of his object; to fix them on his thoughts to that for which he lives. He will tell you that the only painful effort would be to do otherwise. Go to the votary of pleasure and you will see the spontaneous complacencies of his heart employed in contrivances for the gratific

ication of appetite, or in quickening the taste of the fatal poison wh. he daily puts to his lips. He who shall single out a definite object & hold on in a forthright course towards it, will always find his thoughts & wishes gathering around it; so in order that these thoughts & wishes may be worthy, the object must be worthy. Now a being like man, who lives here only that he may learn to live hereafter; or who while he passes the threshold of existence is to be formed for higher scenes of action & enjoyment, can have no doubt concerning the purpose or thought to engross his best efforts of mostest affections. He cannot doubt that he is bound to seek a more durable good than earth can give; to appropriate himself to God, the Author of his being; his moral Governor, of his final Judge. Let this then be the object of life, let this be the settled purpose of the heart; if our thoughts will be governed, for they will bend to the predominant design. If they will be well governed, for they will be con

secrated & purified by being sent abroad amongst all that is sacred, elevated, or holy.
9. Virtuous industry, enervated, uninterrupted for a moment, is among the best guardians of purity of heart. It is not enough that the general purposes of life be well chosen: exertion must be tasked. Strength must be put forth in the pursuit. There is nothing, perhaps, which infuses more deadly poison into the sources of action, than idleness. Consult for a moment your own consciousness; and ask yourself what it is that keeps your heart alive; what it is that communicates to your thoughts their healthful vigorous tone, if such be their character? Do you not, in a high degree, the easiness of diligence, the spring of activity, the stirring up, (as I may so call it) of the moral graces of the heart of man, in the pursuit of real good? Industry has an excelling power, of no less than an almost irresistible influence; it not only guides to efficacious virtue, but preserves from the invades of vicious deliberation. Much of our discipline consists in rejecting the bad, as well as choosing the good. Those whose views of feelings, not from the weak or undeveloped parts of character, find their favorite home in the mind of the idle man; for it is shown that house to all the evil spirit returns, and left it empty, I takeeth with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, so they enter into and dwell there. The last state of that man is worse than the first. But he who sees a beam on the proper object of life, suffer it to engross the strength of his mind, the vigor of his thoughts, has on part of his affections or his faculties, to spare for the residence of these little or confine motives, and love so to theory around the heart, that they may find entrance at some unguarded pass. He has no time for his pleasures or pleasures; his hands are full with preparations for eternity. But virtuous industry does more than spare us from many of the most formidable assaults of temptation; it gives strength to combat where one cannot avoid the encounter. Nothing is more true than that idleness weakens the mind; if they who have slept so long under the paralyzing influence of sloth, that they have no inclination for the ordinary labours of virtue, will have little patience and little ability for the hardest toil and virtue imposes. The government of
thought, the power of unyielding sovereignty, our passion. It is not a wish is a wish that will purchase this empire over the moral & intellectual man; it must be fought for, if even at all, because struggles seem hot. Now it is the man of energy, the industrious helot, who has the bright armors of the strong hand for this contest, while the empire of habitual have lost that internal strength only alone can make present successful in the war are honorable, & the fact of lingering voice of this virtue dies away amidst the clamors of loud tumultuous passions.

3. If you would govern you affections well & firmly, think often of God, of the relation in which you stand to him as your Creator, Bene fascination. Moral Governor & Judge. Deport reflection lessons the distance, so to speak, between our Maker & ourselves; when God is thus brought nearness the full presence of Deity is in our minds, our thoughts must severely dare to be impure or wayward. In proportion to rational views of this kind are cherished, will sincerity & frequency, internal virtue will be

broad & strengthened, is strike its roots deep & strong in the soul. Place the heart under the tuition of piety, & you will give it the best & surest guardianship. For, who is this Being whom you are directed to make the object of your reflections? It is He who has launched the planets on their courses to tell his glory to the universe, who has filled the world with designs of mercy to tell his goodness to men, to tell us that the air we breathe, the light which chears us, fall the blessings which mark this world a good world, are from him who has made us the subjects of a moral government, the candidates for his favour, has given us hopes full of immortality, spread before us prospects full of glory, who will judge us with mercy yet with justice, by no distinctions but those of character, will look only on the heart. Now we are not so constituted as to reflect on what we know or see of such a Being without feeling ashamed, or afraid to cherish a thought of a purpose we would draw upon in his displeasure, or expose us to the stern rebuke of his
pure & searching laws. Who does not know the powerful effect produced by the presence of a man whom we reverence? how it controls the mind, sways the will, deters the current of corrupt passion; how the character of God, brought home to our hearts, specialised by habitual views, cannot have less efficacy, or spread over the mind a less purifying influence. Besides there are sometimes difficulties & temptations in our moral conflicts not nothing but the overwhelming sense of a present Day, can help us to surmount or resist. Passion may be so strong as to abate in its risings, suspend propensities or abortious as to defy the influences not all the calculations of character, interest, call the ingenious & honest feelings of nature, may produce. You might perhaps as well attempt to quell a storm by reasoning, or to check the rushing tide by pricking that the sea gains nothing by overflowing. Go then, think often of God & his laws, of the relation in which you stand to him, renew your vows of allegiance, fidelity to him; as you do this with frequency, earnestness, & devoted feelings, you will gradually disencumber yourself of your unsubdued passions, your fierce & morose desires, your vicious affections, your impure propensities. I become ripe for the world of glory.
Other thank all eyes look & on all creatures depend, we desire to look to thee with those feelings of gratitude, reverence, & humility, as finite beings in the presence of the Infinite & creatures in the presence of their Creator, should ever doth. Will thou, O God, enable us to keep our hearts with all diligence, knowing that out of them flow the thoughts, and bring our wishes, desires & propensities under the dominion of thy most holy laws. We pray for that holiness of heart & purity of purpose which are required in the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may obey from the heart that form of doctrine which is delivered unto us in the word of truth. We thank thee, most merciful God, that thou hast allowed us to come into thy courts this day & to hear the instructions of our holy religion. If we have at this time received pure & good impressions, grant that they may have a permanent influence on our lives, & that we may be finally prepared for the inheritance of thy peace.
At Watertown, Jan. 17th, 1819, forenoon.
At Mr. Peabody's (Boston) April 29th, 1821, forenoon.
At home, April 10th, 1836, afternoon, evening.