No. 48

"Blessed are the poor in spirit."

Jan. 1, 1820
Matthew. v, 9. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

This is the first sentence in that admirable summary of the morality, which we call the sermon on the mount. Perhaps there is scarcely a moment in our civil life, as recorded by his historians, in which presents a more affecting and impressive view, than the moment, at which he uttered these words. He was surrounded by his disciples, by his contemporaries, the Jews; by his disciples, who understood as yet not the spiritual nature of his kingdom, had come to him with hearts unsubjected to the power of religion, full of undefined hopes and but dim views of the honors of privileges with which they expected their Master to dispense to his followers; 8 by the Jews, who gathered
coming of the Messiah had been announced by his forerunner, John the Baptist. Now men had seen a public declaration from heaven to the claims of this remarkable personage. It was at the very moment when the people were earnestly looking for their deliverer, that Jesus appeared in that divine form, confirmed upon them by God.

When we consider how much there was in all this to gratify the long cherished hopes of the Jews, how men further reflect on the character of the minds to which he addressed himself on this occasion, how they were filled with profound expectations of a glory hitherto immeasurable, how ill prepared they were to receive a humble teacher of suffering. It seems to be something extraordinary, impressive in the plain and simple declaration with which he commenced this discourse to them - 'Happy are the poor in spirit.' How must the false hopes of these men have been cast down, when instead of the promise of their deliverance, oh they expected from Jesus, they heard him pronounce a blessing on the humble, lowly in heart, and declare that such would be the favored subjects of that kingdom over which he was about to establish.
Such is the disposition, yea, the state of heart, such is the essential qualification of the true disciple, an indubitable evidence of admission into the heavenly kingdom, that it shall be honoured and distinguished by the blessing of God... And no wonder that such a one lays such stress on the grace of humility; for it is that grace which gives to all others, perhaps the most difficult of attainments, enters vitally, deeply into the character of the sincere follower of Christ. It is indeed the richest pos-
ed in the ways of grace. The disciple of Jesus must be humble; yet, humility is a hard lesson to learn. Pride is a vice, and breaks both in the heart of man before death than any other. It exists itself in the first years, and with continual endeavors to suppress it, influences our last. Other vices triumph in particular ages, whereas the predominant passion of one country is repressed by another; but pride is the nature of every country, infects every climate, corrupts every nation, and runs equally through the gardens of the east, the deserts of the north, and reigns as less in the caverns of the savage than in the palace of the prince. "Thou art as wise with all our wisdom," St. John turns it around and virtues, like the serpent, fastening himself in the tree of life in paradise... Now such prosperity, so deep settled, so wide in its dominion, so comprehensive in its influence, must be on high regarded, before we can hope that we have cheered the spirits of the Gospel, so that we shall receive the reward of the children of God.
Let us consider in the first place the duty of occasionally being a spirit of humility, and the happiness of possessing such a spirit.

1. Man should be humble, because he is a dependent creature, because his possessions are fleeting and passing. What have we that we have not received? Therefore, what have we of which we have a right to be proud? There is nothing more valuable than possession; no one in society is as powerful as the man of God, for we do not entirely possess the earth and its fullness; absolute power and dominion are defined in God. It might seem strange to us, were not the instances of it so common, that a king, who was called by something else by the word of the Almighty, whose name is nothing more than a temporary, in whom he who formed it has breathed the breath of life, should act as if he were the author of his own existence, as if he were the independent possessor of himself, as if he were endowed with the power of creating and possessing all those resources of enjoyment so impossible to most of us. We would not be amended if we would once seriously think of it, to see so great a man as himself in the throne of the universe, bidding defiance to this God, is insulting the majesty of heaven. Yet, whose heart is changer by pride in fact, if his conduct does this, whereas he might end his at being changed with such flagrant impiety. It surely enough to humble the spirit of the brightest intelligence to consider that nothing was his original, such as the condition of man: by the command of God he brought into nothing. He derives his predilection from darkness and emptiness. And though now by the mercy of God he is again in nothing. And though now by the mercy of God he is again in this condition, he is something yet; he still holds his being as preciously as he first received it. He defends as much for this existence on the will of his Maker, as bright does upon the sun of the image. He gives it up to the presence of the body. If God does but turn his face from him, he vanishes into nothing. And he does the void, and one was made, but the power was nothing, the Almighty needs one opposing command; he needs not, be distinct with the arm of this power, if then we sin that once into the condition from which He originally brought us. And shall that Being be found in the presence of nothing? no, who wants to nothing, the moment God shuts him out from his protection. No, says He.
own: "pride was not made for man." Man must forget his origin and extraction, he must forget his per-
son, be must forget his helplessness, be must forget
that he came from dust, go to dust, be must forget what he was or what he is - all this be must
forget; or he cannot be saved. The same lesson of
humility is likewise taught us by the frailty of our
senses. What base are that are call our own? What
but the semblance of righteouness, the hope of immor-
tality? These alone are imperishable: these alone the
hand of time cannot moulder away, nor the accidents
of life destroy. Review for a moment your earthly privi-
leges, your possessions, your relations, and see, whether there be one, with to hold
by so firm a tenure, that it may not be taken from you
whenever it please Him who gave them. Are you proud
of your riches? You surely need not be reminded that they
are like the sand on the sea shore, not the most waivy
may wash away. You need not be told, that though
today you may revel in plenty, tomorrow may find you
poorer than those whose lot you have been accustomed
to most deeply to commiserate. Are you proud of your
health, strength? God may send his message of disease,
One touch may wither away all your boasts, while
you are exulting in your orgies, you may be brought
down to the helplessness of an infant. Are you proud
of your reputation, fame among men? It is building on
pride, like an airy bubble, not may soon burst, as leave
you in shame and disgrace. Are you proud of your friends?
They also in the midst of your exultation may sink like
the grave. And you helpless, solitary, stripped of your
defence and your glory. Are you proud of your mental ac-
quirements, of your wisdom or learning? Remember that
even mind, that best gift of God to man, may be laid
in ruins; that the light of intellect, with has placed
within us, may at any moment be dimmed, is quenched in
darkness. If that are we ever liable to lose that reason, oh
forms on noble distinction from the brute creation. In
that, there is not a single possession with you can detain, not
a single arm if good oh you can assert, when it shall please
Heaven to call them away to serve for the, should you
be proud? Wherefore should you be proud of that, which
you cannot command, which after all your toil you have at
length viewed it, may immediately vanish, and leave you to face its shadow. - Why, my friend, as a template may disappear, when we reflect that we came from nothing, and amidst the numerous objections heaped around us in life, there is not one more than we have any permanent power in, and if we think of these things, I know not how we can be otherwise than humble.

9. We ought to be humble, because we are sinners. On this ground we may always build our humility. He, who feels himself to be a sinner, best knows how to repel the assaults of pride. When God appeared in the wilderness, then the heart of man was deeply touched with the conviction of his impurity and guilt. - What rose the sentiments of first springing up in his mind? "He answered the Lord, who is my refuge, what shall I say? I will not answer, yea, more, but I will proceed no further." There was there a finer illustration of the arrogant, vain, blooming pride, as springs from the blood of man to the deep conviction of sin produced than in the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, who went up to the temple to pray. - "The Pharisee stood, and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." This is the true language of pride; it always delights to think it self better than its neighbours. Turn now to the publican, what are the emotions rising in his heart? - "Standing afar off, he would not lift up so much as his eyes toward heaven, but condescends to his heart, crying God, be merciful to me a sinner." - This is the utterance of a soul humbled to the dust under the consciousness of guilt, prostrating itself in trembling adoration before a God of holiness. Would you know on which of these characters our Lord fixeth, both with complacency and approbation? Hear then the substance of our Saviour's speech: "I tell you, when the publican went into the temple, and confessed, God be merciful to me a sinner; he that sanctified, himself, and yet is not sanctified, rather than the other, for every one that exalts himself shall be cast down, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted." - When we think of what God requires of us, of what we have done, when we reflect on the purity of his holy laws, & the transgressions of our life, on our
many omission of duty, or our coldness, or our thoughtlessness, our want of cheerfulness in heavenly truths, our hearts must be hardness indeed, if there be a single proud thought left unblushed in our minds. A proud mind is a monster. It presents a combination of contradictions that can never be reconciled; yet no character in the world is more common. If we would claim to be humble, we must think less of our virtues, more of our vices; we must think how often we have transgressed. 100 how seldom we have obeyed the commands of God; how little we have performed. How much we have omitted to perform. There is no subject on which we are more liable to self-deception than this. Women- we ourselves by a very false, but flattering standard, often, when we sit down to examine our hearts, conscience points to many a dark and foul spot of guilt; anxiety for relief from the painful conviction, we look round to see whether we can find some consolation by comparing ourselves with others. If we find some among our neighbors more than we are, we are at ease shaded with the dissimilarity; if because we are not the worst in the world, we are glad to believe that we are very good. We take to ourselves a great deal of credit, because we have not ventured to be so openly profligate as some among our acquaintance. But this is a species of self-flattery in which it is very dangerous to indulge. The standard we set ourselves to compare ourselves with is not the conduct of our fellow men, but the will of God, as revealed in the Scriptures. The question is not, whether we have been as good as our neighbors, but whether we have been what our Saviour requires his followers to be. And if we do compare our conduct with the conduct of others, we ought to remember, that if there are some who are worse, there are many who are better than ourselves. It is easy to be proud of our virtues, that we may have but little; it is not uncommon to become swelling with importance, because the dark lines of guilt and through the reputation of his neighbor, have never been impressed on his name—forgetting that the eye of the Condescient sees many a foul stain in that proud heart, old numbers 8 is ceasing in the discussion, and tells us that it is true. If often we feel at any time the feelings of pride rising in our bosoms, let us remember that we are sinners: that not a day close unseen without bearing with it some memorial of our folly and wickedness, 11 that God who looks through our hearts sees
there much every much that asks for mercy not for justice 8 then we can command not silence the rebellion of pride & feel our souls softened by the spirit of humility pervading them like the dew of heaven on the fields in its freshness

3. The ought to be humble, because humility is a doctrine enjoined upon us by the spirit of our holy religion. It is the example of our Saviour. It may indeed be reconciled among the distinguishing grace and duties men lasted profound by fig. By the heathen monarchs it was verified or overlooked, 8 in the C. T. it does not stand forth so conspicuous, as in the pure dispensation of olds days. But it is written on the forehead of thy capital character; it is a precept of the first magnitude in the instruction of our Saviour. God rebuked the proud, says St. James, but gave the grace to the humble 8. We are cleansed with humility, says St. Peter. It is indeed the great ornament, the sole grace given to the followers of Jesus. Amidst the numerous divine excellences, it enter into the composition of the character of our Lord; he himself puts out humility, as the heart in which he should earnestly strive to copy in our own lives. He lays his finger upon it, as if we were H. select it peculiarly for our imitation. "Take my yoke upon you," says He, "and learn of me, for I am meek & lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls." Look for a moment at the life of our Saviour; you find its life of humility; if he was humble, shall we, sons of men? He who came in the most humble manner was executed by any messenger of the Most High, who came to bring light & life to a dark & perishing world, he to whom God gave not the spirit of measure, but those "in all the glory of divine inspiration," he was exalted far, far above all the heavens, & man can give a take away; even he was made of dust, even he himself wrote the death of the cross. Of the humble, the Master said, as given as an example of humility, shall we, who dwell in houses of clay founded in the dust, we in whose hearts the lines of guilt are imprinted darkly unknowing (we whose life is like the morning cloud, which early, we arise, who are made helpless, who, after the wrath of any moment casts us to the dust 8 shall we dare to be proud? Are we not ashamed to boast of our infirmity? Our only hope is that opens to us vision the gate of the para-
love of God, was humble & approaching as if he had been
invested with no peculiar glory. Let it be an evermotion
for us to imitate the example of our Lord, and in this respect, as in
all others, shine when others shine, with heavenly brightness,

We will now briefly mention another topic for my
exercise, and early it stated as another argument in favor
of humility. I mean the advantages of the happiness
which may be found in cultivating a humble spirit. Peace,
besides its quiet and submission, is the most tranquil,
tranquil disposition a man can have. There is no man who
meets with so many misfortunes, so many disappoint-
ments, so many vexations, as the proud man. A proud
spirit is the unfailing source of discontent; for it always
demands much more than others are willing to yield,
yet becomes enraged when its claims are denied. One
might as well expect to see the surface of the lake cal-
ming sedately, while the wind and the storm are abroad in its
depths as to find the soul of the proud man peaceful
and happy. No sin all this misery, all this unrest.
Humility is a sure safeguard. It chastens the soul,
and prepares us for the vicissitudes of life; it makes
our expectations reasonable and denies modesty, these
saves us from many a dark hour of disappointment.

And more than all it is for the humble & lowly, that the blessings of heaven are
reserved... "Blessed are the poor in spirit," says our text,
who "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Listen to the ascen-
dition of Jesus. "If there are no are the rewards of
humble humility." Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabit-
et eternity, whose name is holy. "I dwell in the high and holy
place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble
spirit."... My first the obligations to humility have been set before
us. Can we forget, that it is the first of the graces
that communicates beauty and loveliness to all the rest?
Surely not a day passes over us without bringing with
it sufficient to teach us the lesson of humility. Our
sins tell us, that we have need to be holy in heart; our
infirmities ask us, why we are so proud? If there is error
from the tomb, or birds be humble, for there must always
be heads at last... Death is indeed a most powerful teacher of
humility, for it teaches us, that the outcast of the poor, the lowly
of the body must alone make their bed in the dust. Death
walks in the midst of us, while we are boasting of our pre-
sessions of our powers, if dwelling without imaginary impor-
tance. but cold heart is a peril, if there were any. We
see we wishes, but the hope who rests in it. that
life belongs to the humble, but every proud man's head
seems of Jehovah;" thus with the Lord. let not the wise man
play on his wisdom, neither let the mighty man play in his
might, let not the rich man play in his riches: but let
him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth
his own heart. that I am the Lord, who excuseth loving-
kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: from
these things do I delight, saith the Lord!"  Jan. 1828.

Others who act with them who seek thee
in faith, in purity of heart, and down when we intent
thee the influences of thy good spirit, that we may be
come such as they would to have us to be. Give us grace
that we may be thankful to humble of once a spirit. May
we have such a deep sense of our dependence, our finity,
your sinfulness, as to exclude former hearts all this,
thought of pain derive. May we take upon us the yoke
of our Lord, cleanse of them who were much of losing it that
we may find rest to our souls. May we be clothed
with humility & meekness, with the moment of a quiet
spirit. Remembering that our life, both declare, that
we are the sons in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom
of heaven. may we strive to cherish the disposition that
we may inherit the blessing. If grant Ely we beseech
thee, that we may pass through all the changes
of trial of this world, that we may be meet subjects
for the world to come revealed unto us by Y. C. thy S.
At home, Jan. 16th. 1820. - forenoon.
At home, April 26th. 1821. - afternoon.