No. 63.

On the resemblance between the character of little children and that of Xthians.

May 28, 1820.
Matthew XVIII. 3. — "And he said, verily I say unto you, except ye be converted ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

It is one of the most striking beauties in the manner of our Saviour's instruction, that they frequently grow out of the occasion, on which they are delivered, and are illustrated by objects present to the sight of his hearers. We are not presented with dry discussions, in which only general principles are stated, 

or consequences, on which may be drawn from them, left to each one to find out for himself. Whatever is taught is, that we cannot escape the practical application of it. It is divine wisdom embodied, set before us, and unless we shut our eyes upon it, we can
not but perceive its brightness & its direct, immediate value. The instructions of *X* may be compared to a stream, which is not lost or made useless by being spread over a large surface, but moves in a narrow and clear channel, and conveys us rapidly to the point at which it was intended we should arrive. And it is plain, that this form of teaching, in which the senses are brought into it and the impressions of truth is better adapted, than any other, to the generality of mankind. It has the honor of containing what it is designed to convey more deeply, far more in the mind, than any method beside. It gives no room to the idle speculations of imagination, the arbitrary interpretations of conjecture, or the fantastic constructions of depraved passion. In this manner, *X* in several instances carried home to the hearts of his hearers in a simple & attractive form, the most important truths of the most sublime doctrine. The text affords a beautiful illustration of this manner. The disciples, in the circle of their hearts, became to Jesus with a question or inclination, but the primary these ambitious feelings, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? (By the kingdom of heaven is meant, because in many other places the reign of the Messiah; is this the discipline, like the Jew's, expected would be a reign of temporal glory. They therefore, with all their worldly cares that are coming to them, more anxious to know, who should hold the first place in this new kingdom. But they supposed their Master was about to establish it. It seems the spirit of malice and envy then, they were jealous competitors for honors. And as they would have refused to them among them, their Master said, you shall then the marks of highest favor, and in whom he would confer the most of earthly offices. When we consider that such were their feelings, so pure, so simple, in a very significant proof of our Saviour's affection. He makes no direct reply to the first question, but in a very significant way of these same disciples. He calls a little child to him, and sets him in the midst of them, 30th
very likely into your opinion; except ye be converted, ye will not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—Nothing could more effectively bring down their towering expectations, than this gentle, yet deep, and powerful rebuke. Instead of being clothed with authority, with honor, with offices in the new dispensation, it teaches them that they must put on the simplicity, the unpretending, the humility of children. How wide is the distance between the fruit of such a mind, viz. that to which directed their attention, yet through this wide distance be assured them, their feelings not, or else, they might not only never rise to honor, but would not be permitted even to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The expression, "unless ye be converted, ye will not enter into the kingdom of heaven," is considered by some as an expression in the Hebrew idiom, which should be translated, unless ye become as little children ye shall not enter into, i.e. unless you assume the purity & honest heart of a child.
in sin, in fact, that whatever they may be teaching, if they hope for the favor of God. To convince all that is unrighteousness, and inconsistent in our ideas of God, His character, His laws, of the religion of its nature and requirements, to purge our hearts from the pure desires and holy affections, to rescue them from the sway of corrupt and tyrannical passions, to substitute habits of virtue in the place of habits of vice, to get the better of bad propensities, of bitter feelings, of uncharitable thoughts, to draw our souls away from all that is transient, mean, debasing, purer than on these things, we are eternal, sublime, elevating, to leave the dust of earth, to look to the pure and peaceful region beyond the skies, to do these things in sincerity, from the heart, is the true change; this is the change through which, if we have not already passed, the Lord requires us to pass. This, only, is the real, true conversion, all others are but counterfeit fragments; it is idle for any man to boast.

of being converted, till the general tenor of his mind, or the general state of his feelings, indicate that he is a true child of God. The only change, we can be of any value, is a moral change - the change from an impure to a pure heart, from a bad life to a good one.

In pursuing the thought suggested by my text, I propose to consider some points of resemblance between the character of the true child of little children.

1. The true child must resemble a little child in innocence, purity. He must take his lesson from that age, which is as yet unpolluted by crime. It is in childhood before the heart has been polluted by passing through the polluting and debasing influences of the world, before the young affections have become selfish, and mind is distorted, can he be called into action only by interest or by passion, before conscience has become paralysed by its voice is lost among the clamors of gracious desires and headlong propensities. It is in this age, that we find the beautiful pattern of the true child's life. The child is innocent, is happy in its innocence, so should the followers of Jesus be. The thoughts and wishes of the
proper subject for the semblance of virtue is to preserve the society. - There is an ingenious, open, & sincere disposition, & which the early days of childhood 88 this disposition too should make the heart's life, but like a mirror, though sometimes dimmed by darkness, should habitually reflect the virtues & graces of the Gospel. That condituated state of mind, which is unsaddened by the habits of artifice & deception, best becomes the followers of Jesus. - Purity, singleness of heart is the distinguishing badge of a saint.

2. Thax should resemble the little children in that docile, teachable heart, oh forms one of the most common traits of the character of early life. Childhoo is usually seen to receive & frequently to seek instruction. It seems to be moulded & guided by the hand of the heart as teacher. Ignorant, yet well, & unacquainted with the terrors of life, or which it is about to be cast, the child stands to hear your lessons, & they go to its heart, for it loves to gain reerence as to the oracle of wisdom, as one who can communicate all that needs to be known, who can feed its young curiosity.

[Continued text]
in your breast in those he is teaching upon great truths of important duties for by obeying you are enabled to learn the essence of character of the Deity to understand the nature of the condition in which you are placed in this world & the relations in which you stand to him in consequence you are deeply engaged in the preservation of the means of his service not without your consent the Almighty deems by the ministry of these powers not to have confided again wholly the conduct of the events of life & by the course of his providence in prosperity adversity in sickness in health in pain or in pleasure in suffering or enjoyment we alone recognize the Deity's justice or his judgments. The scene of life are full of divine instruction it is the moral ethic in government of the world that commands all nations rise to glory & master the decay ordinates & guides all the mighty revolutions of changes and progress in the face of the earth. But the best & profoundest & most elevating instruction of the Almighty are the revelations communicated by his Son our Saviour the word hath appeared to enlighten and to save the world.
durance to his Saviour, which the little child loves to its earthly parent. He is conscious that on God he unceasingly depends for every thing and all the pleasures or enjoyments in this world, & for every thing he hopes in the world to come; & then here to him he looks with an unmingling & controlling heart. He is conscious that he has no right in himself; & that God alone is his proprietor; & therefore he yields to Him the tribute of unquestioned obedience, & resigns himself with a consciousness to the dispensations of His providence, assured that whatsoever He does is done because it is best. He is conscious that he is weak, & fallible, & yielding, that the truth he now holds dear his version on earth is liable & may easily be learn, & that if the arm alone, & now subject to his existence, were removed, he would soon sink into the dust from which he sprang; & therefore he is humble, slowly in heart: he dares not to be proud, when he remembers that the hand by which he has been led & body may at any moment send him to the land of darkness; he dares not to complain, when he remem-

bers that his hopes are secured by the pledges of God's enduring goodness. Small these respects he imitates the character of the little child—equally obedient, equally humble, equally submissive. He keeps his heart as still, whatever be the path which it appoints him to walk, & whatever seem it is made known to him, he receives his to obey, & though it may not be always sweet, assured that the portion of his care is minded by the hand of mercy, & he makes humble to the constant animate of his breast, because his heart tells him, that every emotion of pride is a sin against reason as well as against God.

4. I will remark but one more point of resemblance between little children and men. Children are at the forming period of life. They have but just entered on the stage where they are to perform the part assigned to them. This is the season of preparation for the scenes & the duties which are before them; they are now going through a discipline, not to fit them for what they shall be at a future day. Children
is the season of education for mankind of all ages.
And so, my child, life is to the human, if one may say, the season of education for eternity. What child needs to the child with respect to subsequent portions of life, such is the whole hope to the child with respect to that endless existence we have beyond the grave. Here then we have a striking important point of resemblance between the condition of children of that of nations. This world, my child, is the school in which we are to receive the instructions that shall fit us for the world to come.
Here we are in the infancy of being. Eternity will be the manhood in which the soul may expand itself to noble scenes of action, to higher states of enjoyment. God has placed us here surrounded by all the means of probation, in the midst of his discipline. Under the tuition of his providence, all this is designed to fit us for something more than to obey his laws and act out what will be continuously remedied in this world. The love of God is the preparation for that state, where we may do burnish as the angels in heaven. Whatever character may be stamped upon our hearts by the means of religious education, or by the trials of life, that will rise with us from the grave, go with us through the innumerable scenes, that await us in eternity. As the little child, when the means of instruction are prepared, it becomes his part to make the instruction of造 the means of advancement. By means of the means of instruction, the child becomes wise for his hour, and usefulness in his future years. So let us faithfully and usefully in the world, that we may become wise and useful in the world above...

We have thus traced some of the broad lines of resemblance between the character of little children and that of nations. This is a beautiful model of how place before his followers, the model of innocence, purity, and loveliness. How different is this view from that presented by some in modern times, who tell us, that children come into the world with hearts as susceptible to the influence of God—If this representation, so revolting to our
feeling were correct—how could I have assured his disciples that unless they "became as little children" they could not enter the kingdom of heaven? How could I have said as he did on another occasion, "in the kingdom of heaven? Would he have commended them as the model of the true character, declared that of such the kingdom is composed, if they had been so wise as to be subject to the eternal curse of the law? For if it cannot be from the hands of others that they come pure; if they are polluted, as also in too many sad instances they are, it is wise, it is the duty, who corrupt them, let us then, in conformity to the injunction of our Saviour, strive to imitate the innocence, the docility, the humility, and the obedient spirit of those children, that we may receive the blessing of him who, in an earth blessed them, "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And the kingdom of heaven shall be blessed. May we learn to imitate the character of our Lord and Master, to copy into our own lives something of His meekness and obedience. May His will, that thus we may be the true disciples of Him, who reign on earth, and do our duty, doing good. - Give us we entreat the heart to be fixed at all times to know, love, serve, and obey.
there, that we may become the heirs of that blessed hope, and the sons of God, as
May the blessing follow the religious
exercises of this day. Grant that by all the
means of grace we have enjoyed, we may become
fit for the inheritance of saints in light.

At home, May 28th, 1820—afternoon.
At Mrs. Poitier's (Bost.) June 14th, 1820—afternoon.
-- Mr. Lowell's (Bost.) Oct. 15th, 1820—afternoon.
-- Waltham (Nov. 5th, 1820—afternoon.
-- Shingburn (Mr. Richardson's) Decem. 17th, 1820—afternoon.
At home, May 19th, 1822—afternoon.
At Brighton, Jan. 19th, 1823—afternoon.