No. 114.

The parable of the unjust steward.

This parable, at the same time that it is full of instruction, presents, at first appearance, some difficulties to our view. It is said to have been spoken by 'to his disciples;'—but probably these did not constitute the whole of his audience, as if they did, the word 'disciples' may be taken in that large sense, as in 'his people,' as synonymous with 'followers.' The parable appears to allude to some of the ways of the publicans & Pharisees, as if they were present. Indeed we are expressly told that 'the Pharisees, who were covetous, heard these things,'—(p. 116.)
fictions narrative who don't their well adapted to these to where it was the sphere. The instruction of that conveys, while be best enforced. Or the difficulties it presents must easily explained by considering its several parts, as they fill each other in regularities.

Reflect on the conduct & fate of the unfaithful steward. It is one example of the fruit of all the policy & stretchiness of human dishonesty. This steward appears to have gained the unreserved confidence of his employers, yet have been entrusted with the whole management of his estate. Yet this confidence be shamelessly abused, betrayed. "He waste his goods," i.e., he misunderstood his own property, partly not only by criminal carelessness & negligence, but by appropriating what be pleased to his own purposes. To the discomfiture of his private enemies, to the gratification of his taste for pleasure. He wound himself into his master's bosom, as it were, that he might more easily influence the mind for his interest. There are no crimes of a darker character, than the abuse of confi-
to shame. Like the unjust steward, and his master also was accused to his master that he had wasted his goods, the man who is unfaithful to his trust is soon of hated detection, dragged out of obscure in the midst of his webs of darkness to the seeing detection of the world. He has so many points to guard that he will almost certainly leave some undone; while he is plotting to effect his plans of deceit, he is treading on unsafe ground. It is not a happy circumstance for the welfare of society, that no man can be trusted alone; he must have some connections with others, these connections will sooner or later betray him. When he is called upon to give an account of his stewardship, his fraud is detected, and all confidence is withdrawn; he is no longer to be trusted. Therefore the beginning of disgrace, in how in all he finds but the sympathy he re-lishes. Hence his dishonor, and the dishonorous man is always the unhappy man. The next wave of time rolls on and washes it away. But honesty, like every other vice, is a most precious virtue. The hour of its advent in truly glorious rise sounds him with notes of consternation, while he is busy with his plans of deception and fraud, he is dejected,
counsel in his ear. "I cannot, says he, ‘Like a beast am ashamed.' He therefore resolves, if possible, to bring himself off by yet deeper atrocity. He would not be disgraced by falsehoods: but having laid aside every scruple, he was prepared to go all lengths. He accordingly resorted to the expedient of securing the good will of his master's debtors on his side, by releasing them from a part of their debt. He also offered a 100 pounds for obtaining a part of this debt. With increased acquisitiveness the man was excused from half the debt, with 100 pounds. The share of what was reduced to 30. This was indeed most gross and scandalous dishonesty. He was nothing but a villainy well suited with his master's部份. But as he knew it would gain him favour with the debtors, as his employer was about to discharge him from his service, he hesitated not to take the hardest step. And this is a very just representation of the progress of vice in the mind of man. And he requires another to reflect it. Wrong shall not, it is said, AMI FALSO, false, endless artifices must be used to support the building, or it will be in imminent
danger of falling on the builder's head. Overwhelming him in the ruins. When men have one interest at the crooked way of injustice, they soon become so engrossed, that they find it almost impossible to retreat, and are under a sort of necessity of proceeding. Don't suppose that when you have once begun to practice fraud, it will be easy for you to stop: no, like the unjust steward, you must think upon ingenious to form new contrivances, to ruin us to support the last. Each new deception will become only the introduction to another; and every fraud must be followed by a new one.

2. Let us observe how this conduct was received by the master of the steward. We are told that the Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely. This at first sight seems very strange; yet accountable. He should hardly expect that the master, thus injured, would applaud the conduct of the injurious servant. But we should look in view the object of his praises, what is was for which he commended him. It was not because he was good, but because he was wise, as it might be better expressed, because he was crafty or cunning. The steward had hit upon the one expedient, by which he could entice himself from present difficulties; spare himself from utter disgrace; and gain even upon friends, at his master's expense reputation. By his own dishonesty, he that outwardly standing as a villain he had committed, became now most people ready to be found him, to debase his character, to injure his diacurence, to conspicuous of severity of his lord's temper, rather than to any want of honesty in him. Nor it was for his constant address manifested in this little, but dishonesty of expedient policy, that the master commended him, not for any moral excellence. It might not be said that he was him so much, as that he condoned, that he was a
rise man to serve his own ends. I shall take the best scheme for his own benefit, that his situation would admit.

Thus far we have considered the parable simply as a narrative, without reference to any thing else in the application which Luke makes of it. We perceive at once that he turns it to a religious moral account, and teaches that we ought to make as wise an use of our wealth, especially of the means of acquiring eternal riches, as the unjust steward did of accomplishing his dishonest purposes, that meant to be as prudent dispositions in providing for good things as he was in managing his fraudulent designs. That act of comparison between kind the book shows this in introducing the remark, after speaking of the commendation he bestowed on the master when he trusted his children to his servants to manage, that "the children of this world are wise in their generation than the children of light." But the children of this world he means those whose hearts are glibly engaged in mercenary worldly concerns, affecting no eternal interest in the permanent things of earth, of by children of light. Those who place their highest good in virtuous principles of affection, in ascribing to the future of heavenly things. The one is the man of the world, the other is the child of God; one has from the conduct of the steward in the parable takes occasion to remark, that the former are worse in their generation than the latter; i.e. they take more pains to encumber. 

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like the import need. I take pains to accomplish that wrath. The latter are useful, if unsavory, I must in important objects.

We come next to that expectation of our Lord; "make to yourself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Mammon, as you well know, signifies riches; instead of being a true friend of righteousness, it should be a friend of deceitfulness, i.e., deceitful riches, thus enforcing their source of fleeting nature. When our Lord points his followers to make to themselves friends of these deceitful riches, his intention undoubtedly is, to exhibit them as a wise and religious use of the wealth they may have, that they may in the best sense make riches their friends. There is this a silent reference to the conduct of the steward. By desertion, fraud, he forced his friends. When he wanted their assistance, this our Lord advises his followers to turn to a far higher and more account for himself, may have, not only the steward, but even the friend of unrighteousness, deceit, but by a constant of generous, benevo-
lust use of them to make them true friends; we make them tell well, to have them so, that they may bear some good memorial for us at the last of heaven; in them, that God who has given them to us has not given them in vain. As a motive for this, he adduces respect to riches, that when you fail, they may receive you, as it were, as they were received into everlasting habitations. Thus he intimates that the proper use of riches will be one means of securing the favor of God; that heaven, at all will endure, when riches with all other things earthly shall have vanished. This would be indeed making ends of the mammon, deceitful as it is; it would be doing something to secure the friendship of God. Instead of the love, partly from private interest, like those of the stewards, to be obtained by force, the true riches of this case of wealth will be the means of increasing his virtue by increasing his means of doing good, of proving his good account, and when he is called again to account for his stewardship, these riches may testify alread for him, that he has used them well and worthily.

But let us not apply the instruction of this occasion to his disciples in a near sight. They were intended by far a much more important office than could arise from the possession of the simplest wealth. Poverty was to be esteemed out of earthly treasures, but of the manifold grace of God. He had just been exhorting the proper use of riches in such a manner as to make them true friends; he now gives the subject more to the faithful use of riches in such a manner as to make them true friends; he now gives the subject more to the faithful use of riches, by addressing himself to his disciples, and to the faithful use of riches in their use of it.

He says, 'The faithful steward is, as the steward of the house of faith in the heart, is faithful also in that which is placed in the heart, is unjust also in much.' If the fore eye have not been faithful in the eyes of the one man, who shall commit to you trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is your own, who shall give you that which is great?' There are cases where the apostles were to be entrusted.
the true riches, by way of contrast to these worldly possessions, are so often false and deceitful. If they then were dishonest towards these worldly possessions, whether large or small, how could they be qualified for the right use of these heavenly treasures, or were to be put into their hands? If they were unfaithful in the least important, would they not be unfaithful in the more important? The same injudicious disposition would affect all things. The  generous treasurers in earthly and temporal affairs will operate also in greater, in those of a spiritual nature of the utmost importance. Consequently such men could not be qualified for the service of God. —  of the example of Judas is a memorable one to support this principle. In the office of a desirable he showed the same sort of treachery and faithfulness, as he had doubtless cherished before; this was brought to betray his Master to his murderers for a paltry bribe. — But the other disciples remained faithful, this yielded the incomparable riches of his kingdom, the crown of eternal glory, which is a brief view of the instruction afforded by this parable. — It is not intended in the most minute degree to approve the conduct of principles of the unjust steward; but in them to exhibit a specimen of the child of God with whom bad men sometimes attempt their jokey objects to teach that others should be equally ready for a better, a higher, a holier purpose — that they should manifest as strong an interest in the service of God, as he did in secretly unloading his private declarations, — that the Apostle especially should exact an equal care and skill in the management of the treasures of heavenly truth. — And this parable is a most important lesson for us to learn. The time is not far distant, when we shall see the various objects of our pursuit, in their true characters, often all that will make us godly; and before us, will remain, leave us either to see, or our neglect, or to groan in our folly. — God grant that we may be wise, and see the riches of advantages of this world, as to obtain those treasure.
by richer and sweeter natures

July 1821.

Almighty God, give us, we beseech thee, grace to serve thee aright, to use all the favor that shall come upon us to thy glory and the good of each other. May we seek the true eternal riches, whose gained by doing good, who consist in the favor of thy saving kindness, which is better than life. May we be faithfull stewards of the manifold grace committed unto us, that we may have a good account to render to our Lord. Whatever thou shalt commit to our trust in this world, may we be faithful to the charge. By diligent improvements of serious endeavor, employing our time of probation, acceptable to thee. Such labor in mercy upon us, O Christ, thus us. May we be instructed and edified by the religious exercises of this day. May this not be a lost Sabbath, but may you have receive impressions of favor, resolutions and good effects through the whole next lives.
At home, July 22, 1824. afternoon.