

its sovereignty—just as the punishment of crime in society bears evidence to the justice of the government which is established there. In general, the inward complacency felt by the virtuous, does not so impressively bespeak the real purpose and character of this the ruling faculty in man, as do the remorse, and the terror, and the bitter dissatisfaction, wherewith the hearts of the wicked are exercised. It is true, that, by every act of iniquity, outrage is done to the law of conscience; but there is a felt reaction within which tells that the outrage is resented; and then it is, that Conscience makes most emphatic assertion of its high prerogative, when, instead of coming forth as the benign and generous dispenser of its rewards to the obedient, it comes forth like an offended monarch in the character of an avenger. Were we endowed with prophetic vision, so as to behold, among the yet undisclosed secrets of futurity, the spectacle of a judge, and a judgment-seat, and an assembled world, and the retributions of pleasure and pain to the good and to the evil; this were fetching from afar an argument for the righteousness of God. But the instant pleasure and the instant pain wherewith conscience follows up the doings of man, brings this very argument within the limits of actual observation. Only, instead of being manifested by the light of a preternatural revelation, it is suggested to us by one of the most familiar certainties of experience, for in these phenomena and feelings of our own moral nature, do we behold not only a present judgment, but a present execution of the sentence.