

the mind shifting its attention away from the objects of them, can only be appeased by their indulgence.

7. It is thus that he who enters on a career of vice, enters on a career of headlong degeneracy. If even for once we have described that process of thought and feeling, which leads, whether through the imagination or the senses, from the first presentation of a tempting object to a guilty indulgence—this of itself establishes a probability, that, on the recurrence of that object, we shall pass onward by the same steps to the same consummation. And it is a probability ever strengthening with every repetition of the process, till at length it advances towards the moral certainty of a helpless surrender to the tyranny of those evil passions, which we cannot resist, just because the will itself is in thralldom, and we choose not to resist them. It is thus that we might trace the progress of intemperance and licentiousness, and even of dishonesty, to whose respective solicitations we have yielded at the first—till by continuing to yield, we become the passive, the prostrate subjects of a force that is uncontrollable, only because we have seldom or never in good earnest tried to control it. It is not that we are struck of a sudden with moral impotency ; but we are gradually benumbed into it. The power of temptation has not made instant seizure upon the faculties, or taken them by storm. It proceeds by an influence that is gentle and almost insensibly progressive—just as progressive in truth, as the association between particular ideas is strengthened by the frequency of their succession.