

**THE HANDMAID; OR, THE
PURSUITS OF LITERATURE AND
PHILOSOPHY, CONSIDERED AS
SUBSERVIENT TO THE INTERESTS
OF MORALITY AND RELIGION**

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The Handmaid; Or, the Pursuits of Literature and Philosophy, Considered as Subservient to the Interests of Morality and Religion by J. Davies

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J. DAVIES

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THE HANDMAID;

OR, THE

PURSUIITS OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY,

CONSIDERED AS SUBSERVIENT TO THE
INTERESTS OF

MORALITY AND RELIGION.

FIVE DISSERTATIONS.

BY

THE REV. J. DAVIES, B.D.,

RECTOR OF GATESHEAD, AND MASTER OF KING JAMES'S HOSPITAL,
IN THE COUNTY OF DURHAM:

AUTHOR OF "AN ESTIMATE OF THE HUMAN MIND," &c.

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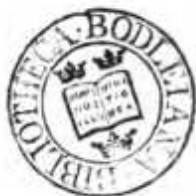
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TO

THE RIGHT REV. EDWARD MALBY, D.D., F.R.S.

LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM.

MY LORD,

THE following discourses were delivered some considerable time since, before a literary and philosophical Institution in the south of England; and, with one or two exceptions, were published at the request of those who heard them. Although, however, they were in the first instance called forth by temporary occasions, and connected in some measure with local circumstances, they all relate to subjects of permanent and universal interest; and as such I venture to hope that, comparatively desultory as they are, they may prove in some degree conducive to the great object which they were designed to subserve. My aim in their original delivery, and in now offering them to the public under the sanction of your Lordship's name, in a collected form, was to give a right direction to those pursuits, which of late years have so extensively engaged the more intellectual and reading portion of the general community in this country. Viewing this condition of the popular mind in all its bearings, and under all its

varied aspects, I doubt not that your Lordship will agree with me that it is to be regarded with satisfaction and delight. I am also confident that, in common with most persons of enlightened and comprehensive views, these feelings on your part are not unmingled with anxiety. Not, indeed, that the knowledge of the laws of nature, whether as displayed on the great theatre of the universe, or as exhibited on the more limited scale of our individual and social condition, can in itself have any other than a salutary tendency. But it is to be borne in mind that the knowledge of man here below, at the best, is but comparative. The amount of what he knows, relatively to the vast sum of truth, physical and intellectual, which he knows not, is reduced to a very narrow span; and it would be mere prejudice or affectation to maintain that the remaining ignorance, liable as it is to be blended with the evil passions inherent in our fallen nature, may not, if left unguarded by higher principles, pervert the modicum of the very knowledge, which is possessed, into an instrument of dangerous operation.

The best and the only legitimate method of obviating this possibility, as it has always appeared to me, is not to attempt to lay an embargo upon the free intercourse and extending commerce of the intellectual faculties—not to impede by artificial mounds the spontaneous and vigorous current of mental exertion and scientific research, for it is not only the right but the duty of every

man to exercise and improve his faculties, but to bring the whole of these speculations and pursuits under a sound and healthful influence—to subordinate the whole range of thought, and the whole domain of philosophy and science, to that master principle which is the great and ultimate law of the universe. Nothing but moral and religious excellence can justly be regarded as pure and unmixed good—incapable of perversion or abuse; and the more our literary and scientific pursuits are brought into harmony with the requirements of that principle, the more sound, salutary, and useful, will be the result.

It was under the influence of these feelings that I was induced to prepare and deliver the following Dissertations, and it is with the same view that I have snatched a few leisure moments from the duties of the important and arduous sphere, to which your Lordship's kindness not long since called me, to collect and arrange them afresh. Your Lordship will not find in these pages the great and peculiar doctrines of our religion—the occasion would scarcely have warranted such an exhibition—all-important as I regard these doctrines; but I was anxious, in each of these addresses, unconnected as they are with each other by any tie of consecutive or relative dependence, to make it manifest that no exercise of the mind, whether of the imagination or intellect, could be safely or legitimately pursued except in unequivocal recognition of the authority of that

religion, of which the volume of eternal truth is the text book.

Distinguished as your Lordship has for many years been, not only as one of the first classical scholars of the age, but also as the friend of popular education, and the supporter of every measure which appeared calculated to promote the illumination and welfare of mankind, I have the satisfaction to feel assured that you consider no progress in knowledge—no expansion of the human faculties, either salutary or secure, which is not in accordance with the spirit of that volume, to which the deepest of our philosophers and the sublimest of our poets have delighted to do homage, and of which one of the most illustrious linguists of modern times has remarked, that “it is a book which has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its subject matter.”

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

With the profoundest feeling of gratitude
and esteem,

Your Lordship's very faithful
and obliged servant,

JOHN DAVIES.

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