

CHAPTER X.

SYMPATHY.

It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind. SIR W. SCOTT.

I ask Thee for a thoughtful love,
Through constant watching wise,
A heart at leisure from itself,
To soothe and sympathize. MISS WARING.

Man is dear to man: the poorest poor
Long for some moments in a weary life,
When they can know and feel that they have been
Themselves the fathers and the dealers-out
Of some small blessings: have been kind to such
As needed kindness, for the single cause,
That we have all of us one human heart. WORDSWORTH.

SYMPATHY is one of the great secrets of life. It overcomes evil and strengthens good. It disarms resistance, melts the hardest heart, and develops the better part of human nature. It is one of the great truths on which Christianity is based. "Love one another" contains a gospel sufficient to renovate the world.

It is related of St. John that when very old—so old that he could not walk and could scarcely speak—he was carried in the arms of his friends into an assembly of Christian children. He lifted himself up and said, "Little children, love one another." And again he said, "Love one another." When asked, "Have you nothing else to tell us?" he replied, "I say this again and again, because, if you do this, nothing more is needed."

The same truth applies universally. Sympathy is founded on love. It is but another word for disinterestedness and affection. We assume another's state of mind; we go out of ourself and inhabit another's personality. We sympathize with him; we help him; we relieve him. There can be no love without sympathy; there can be no friendship without sympathy. Like mercy, sympathy and benevolence are twice blessed, blessing both giver and receiver. While they bring forth an abundant fruit of happiness in the heart of the giver, they grow up into kindness and benevolence in the heart of the receiver.

"We often do more good," says Canon Farrar, "by our sympathy than by our labors, and render to the world a more lasting service by absence of jealousy and recognition of merit than we could ever render by the straining efforts of personal ambition. . . . A man may lose position, influence, wealth, and even health, and yet live on in comfort, if with resignation; but there is one thing without which life becomes a burden—that is human sympathy."

It is true that kind actions are not always received with gratitude, but this ought never to turn aside the sympathetic helper. This is one of the difficulties to be overcome in our conflict with life. Even the most degraded is worthy of the mutual help which all men owe to each other. It should be remembered, as Bentham no less truly than profoundly remarked, that the happiness of the cruel man is as much an integral part of the whole human happiness as is that of the best and noblest of men. Then, again, a man cannot do good or evil to others without doing good or evil to himself.

Probably there is no influence so powerful as sympathy in awakening the affections of the human heart. There are few, even of the most rugged natures, whom it does not influence. It constrains much more than force can do. A kind word, or a kind look, will act upon those upon whom coercion has been tried in vain. While sympathy invites to love and obedience, harshness provokes aversion and resistance. The poet is right who says that "power itself hath not one half the might of gentleness."

Sympathy, when allowed to take a wider range, assumes the larger form of public philanthropy. It influences man in the endeavor to elevate his fellow-creatures from a state of poverty and distress, to improve the condition of the masses of the people, to diffuse the results of civilization far and wide among mankind, and to unite in the bonds of peace and brotherhood the parted families of the human race. And it is every man's duty, whose lot has been favored in comparison with others, who enjoys advantages of wealth, or knowledge, or social influence, of which others are deprived, to devote at least a certain portion of his time and money to the promotion of the general well-being.

It is not great money-power, or great intellectual power, that is necessary. The power of money is overestimated. Paul and his disciples spread Christianity over half the Roman world, with little more money than is gained from a fashionable bazaar. The great social doctrines of Christianity are based on the idea of brotherhood. "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you." Each is to assist the other; the strong the weak, the rich the poor, the learned the ignorant; and, to reverse the order, those who have least are no less to assist those who have most. All depends on higher degrees of power, for disciples do not make their teachers, nor the ignorant and helpless those who are to instruct and assist them.

Man can make of life what he will. He can give as much value to it, for himself and others, as he has power given him. When circumstances are not against him, he has entire control over his moral and spiritual nature. He can do much for himself, and all that God gives must pass through man and his own exertions, as if it were his own peculiar work.

Though we may look to our understanding for amusement, it is to the affections only that we must trust for happiness. This implies a spirit of self-sacrifice, and our virtues, like our children, are endeared to us for what we suffer for them. "The secret of my mother's influence," says Mrs. Fletcher in her Autobiography, "was well expressed by her early friend, Dr. Kelvington, of Ripon, and it may

be called the key-note of her life. He says, in one of his letters to her at the age of seventeen, 'I have never known any one so tenderly and truly and universally beloved as you are, and I believe it arises from your *capacity of loving.*'"

The men most to be pitied are those who have no command over themselves, who have no feeling of duty to others, who wander through life seeking their own pleasure, or who, even while performing good deeds, do so from mean motives, from regard to mental satisfaction, or from fear of the reproaches of conscience. Some of those who are vain of their fine feelings love themselves dearly, but have little regard for the individuals about them. They are very polite to extraneous society; but follow them home and see how they conduct themselves toward their family. Very sad is the story told by the late Dean Ramsay of a little boy who was told of heaven, and of the meeting of the departed there. "And will father be there?" he asked. On being told that "of course he would be there," the child at once replied, "Then I'll no gang."

False sympathy is very common. Sharpe says that one of the most serious objections to pathetic works of fiction is that they tend to create a habit of feeling pity or indignation, without actually relieving distress or resisting oppression. Thus Sterne could sympathize with a dead donkey, and leave his wife to starve. Montaigne speaks of a man as extraordinary, "qui ait des opinions supercelestes, sans avoir des mœurs souterraines." In Butler's profound discourses these counterfeits of sterling benevolence are well detected and exposed.

"Goethe," says Professor Bain, "kept out of the way of suffering, because it pained and unhinged him, proving clearly that he had the greatest possible aptitude for taking in the miseries of his fellows, but positively declined the occasions when he might be called upon for that purpose."*

In the works of St. Augustine, Baxter, Jonathan Edwards, and Alexander Knox, the reader will find how large

* Bain, "On the Study of Character."

a place the religious affections held in their views of divine truth, as well as of human duty. The latter says: "Feeling will be best excited by sympathy; rather it cannot be excited in any other way. Heart must act upon heart; the idea of a living person being essential to all intercourse of heart." True manliness can only exist when the good is sought for its own sake, either as a recognized law of pure duty or from the feeling of the constraining beauty of virtue. This alone reacts upon the human character.

Men are regenerated, not so much by truth in the abstract as by the divine inspiration that comes through human goodness and sympathy. That is the touch of Nature which "makes the whole world kin." The man who throws himself into the existence of another, and exerts his utmost efforts to help him in all ways—socially, morally, religiously—exerts a divine influence. He is enveloped in the strongest safeguard. He bids defiance to selfishness. He comes out of his trial humble yet noble. Canon Mozley has with a master hand shown that the principle of compassion and mutual help that converts into a pleasure that which is of incalculable advantage to society—the alleviation of pain and misery—was a discovery of Christianity, a discovery like that of a new scientific principle. The best and the noblest men are the most sympathetic. Bishop Wilberforce was distinguished by his power of sympathy. A friend was asked, "What is the secret of Wilberforce's success?" "In his power of sympathy," was the ready answer. He was large-hearted, generous, and liberal. He went straight to the front, and threw himself heart and soul into every project which had good for its object. He took the lead in every experiment which seemed to him worth trying. And success was the result.

Sympathy is the capacity of feeling for the sufferings, the difficulties, and the discouragements of others. It was said of Norman Macleod that sympathy was the first and the last thing in his character. He found in humanity so much to interest him. The most commonplace man or woman yielded up some contribution of humanity. "When he came to see me," said a blacksmith, "he spoke as if he had

been a smith himself, but he never went away without leaving Christ in my heart." Man is, above all, the central point of human action, so that what was in him and went forth from him is alone important. Man, during his life on earth, sympathizing and active, is ever associated in his feelings with others: yet we tread alone the more important path which leads over the confines of the earthly state.

When about to enter on his Barony work in Glasgow Norman Macleod said: "We want living men! not their books or their money only, but themselves. . . . The poor and needy, the naked and outcast, the prodigal and broken-hearted, can see and feel, as they never did anything else in this world, the love which calmly shines in that eye, telling of inward light and peace possessed, and of a place of rest found and enjoyed by the weary heart. They can understand and appreciate the utter unselfishness—to them a thing hitherto hardly dreamed of—which prompted a visit from a home of comfort and refinement to an unknown abode of squalor or disease, and which expresses itself in those kind words and tender greetings that accompany their ministrations." These words form the key to the general plan of his work in the Barony of Glasgow.

"I do think," he again said, "that a careful training of our people, to enable them to discharge their individual duties, such as steady labor, preservation of health, sobriety, kindness, prudence, chastity, their domestic duties as parents, their duties as members of society in courteous and truthful dealing, fulfilment of engagements, obedience combined with independence as workmen; their duties as toward the state, whether with reference to their rulers or the administrators of law, along with information on the history and government of their country—that upon such points as these their education has been greatly neglected, and requires to be extensively improved, and based upon and saturated with Christian principle."

Dr. Macleod's words might equally apply to London, the richest as well as the poorest city in the world. Few people know the East of London, with its seething mass of want, wickedness, and wretchedness. Some give their

money to elevate the people, but few give their time of their brains. The late Edward Denison was an exception. He threw himself heart and soul into the work of reclaiming the East of London poor. He established penny banks among them, knowing that the first step to reclaim a man is to wrest his spare earnings from the ginhouse, and make him provide for his family as well as for the future. He proceeded to erect schools, reading-rooms, and an iron church. To a certain extent he raised these people from misery to well-being. But what was he among so many? "What a monstrous thing it is," he said, "that in the richest country in the world large masses of the population should be condemned, annually, to starvation and death! . . . The fact is, we have accepted the marvellous prosperity which has in the last twenty years been granted us without reflecting on the conditions attached to it, and without nerv- ing ourselves to the exertion and the sacrifice which their fulfilment demands." Mr. Denison could only make a be- ginning. He died before the fruits could be gathered in. But if there be any who are willing to follow in his foot- steps, there is still the field of duty which he has marked out.

Hear the cry of Joseph de Maistre at the end of his life of strenuous and grievous travail: "I know not what the life of a rogue may be—I have never been one—but the life of an honest man is abominable. How few are those whose passage upon this foolish planet has been marked by actions really good and useful. I bow myself to the earth before him of whom it can be said, 'Pertransivit benefaci- endo' [He goes about doing good]; who has succeeded in instructing, consoling, relieving his fellow-creatures; who has made real sacrifices for the sake of doing good; those heroes of silent charity who hide themselves and expect nothing in this world. But what are the common run of men like? and how many are there in a thousand who can ask themselves without terror, 'What have I done in this world? wherein have I advanced the general work? and what is there left of me for good or for evil?'"

The last words which Judge Talfourd spoke were these:

"If I were to be asked what is the great want of English society so as to mingle class with class, I should say, in one word, The want is the want of sympathy." This is the main evil of our time. There is a widening chasm which divides the various classes of society. The rich shrink back from the poor, the poor shrink back from the rich. The one class withholds its sympathy and guidance, the other withholds its obedience and respect.

Instead of the old principle that the world must be ruled by kind and earnest guardianship, in which the irregularities of fortune are in part made up by the spontaneous charity and affection of those who were better born, the rule now is, that self-interest, without regard to others, is the polar star of our earthly sphere, and that everything that stands in the way is to be trodden down beneath our hungry hoofs.

Sympathy seems to be dying out between employers and employed. In the great manufacturing towns the masters and workmen live apart from each other. They do not know each other. They have no sympathy with each other. If the men want higher wages, there is a strike; if the masters want lower wages, there is a lock-out. There is combination on both sides. Then a conference is pro- posed, sometimes with good results, sometimes with bad. Agitation goes on, and hard things are said. Sometimes the employer's house is set on fire, and his carriages are burned; the dragoons and infantry are called out, and there is a pause; but what an injury has been done to head and heart on both sides!

And what shall we say of domestic service? The want of sympathy has died out, at least in large cities. There is a constant change going on—one set of servants succeeds another. And yet the lives of families cannot be carried on upon the principles of mere barter—so much money, so much service. Servants, when they enter our homes, should be regarded, in one sense, as members of the family. It is now far otherwise; the servant, though her help is essential to our daily comfort, is regarded as but a hired person, doing her appointed work for so much current coin of the realm.

She lives in the kitchen and sleeps in the attic. With the region between she has no concern, excepting as regards the work to be done there. No sympathy exists between the employer and the employed, no more than if they inhabited different countries, and spoke in different languages.

A lady writing to us about Annie Mackay, who lived with Robert Dick, her master, without fee or reward, but who would not receive poor rates after his death, says, "Her independent spirit is truly a worthy one, and is becoming sadly rare among our peasantry. It is a privilege to cherish it where it remains, for things roll on with such incessant and rapid change nowadays that all old ideas are becoming overturned. Attachment such as she had for her master, dying with her and her generation, will, I fear, become an unknown sentiment in the one now growing up. I am often exasperated at hearing and reading reflections upon the lack of sympathy among masters toward their servants—as if we could stay the changed relations which railways, steamboats, and a little learning have effected on the feelings of servants toward us. They long for change, and cannot be satisfied without it."

The want of sympathy pervades society. We do not know each other, or do not care for each other as we ought to do. Selfishness strikes its roots very deep. In pursuit of pleasure or wealth we become hard and indifferent. Each person is eager to run his or her race, without regard to the feelings of others. We do not think of helping onward those who have heavier burdens to bear than ourselves. Judge Talfourd's last words pointed out the mischief of such a condition. It makes men regardless of fraud and crime. Not recognizing the brotherhood of the race, they selfishly and keenly pursue their own interest over the bodies and souls, and over the lives and properties of others.

The idle and selfish man cares little for the rest of the world. He does nothing to help the forlorn or the destitute. "What are they to me?" he says; "let them look after themselves. Why should I help them? They have done nothing for me! They are suffering? There always will be suffering in the world. What can't be cured must be

endured. It will be all the same a hundred years hence!"

"Don't care" can scarcely be roused by a voice from the dead. He is so much engrossed by his own pleasures, his own business, or his own idleness, that he will give no heed to the pressing claims of others. The discussions about poverty, ignorance, or suffering, annoy him. "Let them work," he says; "why should I keep them? Let them help themselves." The sloth is an energetic animal compared with "Don't care."

But "Don't care" is not let off so easily as he imagines. The man who does not care for others, who does not sympathize with and help others, is very often pursued with a just retribution. He doesn't care for the foul pestilential air breathed by the inhabitants of houses a few streets off; but the fever which has been bred there floats into his house, and snatches away those who are dearest to him. He doesn't care for the criminality, ignorance, and poverty massed there; but the burglar and the thief find him out in his seclusion. He doesn't care for pauperism; but he has to pay the heavy poor's rate half-yearly. He doesn't care for politics; but there is an income tax, which is a war tax; and, after all, he finds that "Don't care" is not such a cheap policy after all.

"Don't care" was the man who was to blame for the well-known catastrophe: "For want of a nail the shoe was lost, for want of a shoe the horse was lost, and for want of a horse the man was lost." Gallio was a "Don't care," of whom we are told that "he cared for none of these things." "Don't cares" like Gallio generally come to a bad end.

The political economists say that the relationship of master and servant is simply a money bargain—so much service, so much wage. In the calculations of the economists this is doubtless the contract which *they* are required to recognize. But the moralist, the philosopher, the statesman, the man, should acknowledge, in the positions of master and servant, a social tie, imposing upon the parties certain duties and affections growing out of their common sympathies as human beings, and the positions they respectively fill. There should be kindness on both sides, with the

respect due to immortal beings. Without this sort of respect, which can only exist where the sense of the real dignity of man as a living soul has penetrated, not merely in the convictions but in the feelings, any amelioration of the condition of society is hopeless.

"Yes!" said Sydney Smith, "he is of the utilitarian school! The man is so hard that you might drive a broad-wheeled wagon over him, and it would produce no impression. If you were to bore holes in him with a gimlet, I am convinced sawdust would come out of him. That school treats mankind as if they were mere machines; the feelings or the heart never enter into their consideration."

Where has our faithfulness, loyalty, and disinterestedness gone? Fidelity seems to be a lost art. It is now a matter of money. Mutual respect has departed. "He that respects not is not respected," says Herbert. We have to go back to the old times for our guiding maxims. The workman respects not the master, and the master respects not the servant. For many years the workman in this country received higher wages than prevailed over the rest of Europe. That time has come to a close. Railways and steamboats tend to make the wages of all countries nearly equal. The time has come when all classes will have to begin a new course of life.

It is not so much literary culture that is wanted as habits of reflection, thoughtfulness, and conduct. Wealth cannot purchase pleasures of the highest sort. It is the heart, taste, and judgment which determine the happiness of man, and restore him to the highest form of being. Burns says:

"It's no in titles nor in rank;
It's no in wealth like Lon'on Bank,
To purchase peace and rest;
It's no in making muckle mair;
It's no in books; it's no in lear,
To make us truly blest:
If happiness hae not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest."

A man of great observation said that there are as many miseries beyond riches as there are on this side of them. The rich man has lost the spirit of encountering difficulties in his efforts to rise to the fortune which he has achieved. But what is he to do with what he has gained? If he has no other resource but the means of accumulating money, he is miserable. Like the rich tallow-chandler, his only pleasure is to go to his old shop "on melting days." He has not been educated to take pleasure in books, to look with interest on the progress of science, to enter into the many avenues which lead to the relief of distress. And yet he holds in his hand a wand of magic power—he has money to relieve misery, and to supply the need of the famishing. He may silence the cry of hunger. He may make glad the heart of the widow and the orphan. But no! He cares more for the money which he has acquired than for the amelioration of the helpless and miserable.

The less we seek the more strictly we live, and the more happy we are; for an unselfish life kills vices, extinguishes desires, strengthens the soul, and elevates the mind to higher things. "The fewer things a man wants," said Socrates, "the nearer he is to God." When Michael Angelo's servant, Urbino, lay on his death-bed, the aged sculptor watched over him night and day, notwithstanding his own infirmities. He thus writes of him to Vassari: "My friend, I shall write ill, but I must reply to your letter. Urbino, you know, is dead. That has been both a favor to me from God, and a subject of bitter grief—a favor, because he who in his life took care of me has taught me in dying, not alone to die without regret, but to desire death. He lived with me for twenty-six years, always good, intelligent, and faithful. I had enriched him, and the moment when I thought to find in him a staff for my old age, he escapes, leaving me only the hope of seeing him again in heaven."

Dionysius, the Cathusian, addressed married persons thus: "Act and speak to your servants as you would wish others to do to you if you were a servant. The master and mistress should show themselves toward all their servants loving, patient, humble, and pacific, while at the same time

just. Never should they speak proudly or severely to them; but, if any fault should be committed in the family, they ought piously and patiently to bear it, or with charity to correct it, remembering how many faults are committed by servants, and yet how God has mercy on them."

It is not for ourselves alone that we work and strive. It is for others as well as for ourselves. There are moral laws, family ties, domestic affections, home government and guidance, which stand on a higher level and are based on nobler considerations than selfish pleasures or money payment. We must beware how we allow our views to centre in ourselves. "No one," said Epictetus, "who is a lover of riches, or a lover of pleasure, or a lover of glory, can at the same time be a lover of men." "To be a lover of men," said St. Anthony, "is, in fact, to live." Thus love is the universal principle of good. It is glorified in human intelligence. It is the only remedy for the woes of the human race. It is sweet in action—in learning, in philosophy, in manners, in legislation, in government.

The love of excellence is inseparable from a spirit of uncompromising detestation for all that is base and criminal. Froissart describes Gaston de Foix as "one who was in everything so perfect that he cannot be praised too much; he loved that which ought to be beloved, and hated that which ought to be hated." St. Augustine says nearly the same thing: "Virtue is nothing but well-directed love, inducing us to love what we ought to love, and to hate what is worthy of hatred."

"What is temperance," said another divine, "but love which no pleasure seduceth? What is prudence but love which no error enticeth? What is fortitude but love which endureth adverse things with courage? What is justice but love which composeth by a certain charm the inequalities of this life?" The Stoics recognized this wonderful power. "Before the birth of love," said Socrates, "many fearful things took place through the empire of necessity; but when this god was born all things arose to men."

Thoughtfulness, kindness, and consideration for others

will always repay themselves. They will produce a grateful return on the part of the objects, and services will be performed with a willingness and alacrity which mere money could never secure. Sympathy is the true warmth and light of the home—which binds together mistresses and servants, as well as husband and wife, father, mother, and children; and the home cannot be truly happy where it is not present—knitting together the whole household in one bond of domestic affection and concord.

The late Sir Arthur Helps, in one of his wise essays, says, "You observe a man becoming day by day richer, or advancing in station, or increasing in professional reputation, and you set him down as a successful man in life. But if his home is an ill-regulated one, where no links of affection extend throughout the family, whose former domestics (and he has had more of them than he can well remember) look back upon their sojourn with him as one unblessed by kind words or deeds I contend that that man has not been successful. Whatever good fortune he may have in the world, it is to be remembered that he has always left one important fortress untaken behind him. That man's [or woman's] life does not surely read well when benevolence has found no central home. It may have sent forth rays in various directions, but there should have been a warm focus of love—that home nest which is formed round a good man's heart."

In the charming picture of domestic peace given by an anonymous author of the fourteenth century, we find that youths of the noblest houses used to serve at table when their fathers entertained their friends.

Cardan, praising the Venetian patricians, particularly notices their gracious and liberal manners toward their servants. He recommends the utmost gentleness and humanity toward them. Of the noble warrior Vectius it was said, "He governs all who are subject to him less by authority than by reason. One would say he was rather the steward than the master of his house."

It is scarcely necessary to speak of the sympathy of the home. "The first society," said Cicero, "is in marriage,