

POISONED EYES.

THERE is a story of a painter who had bitterly offended a woman, so that she determined to take a cruel revenge. He was about to paint a picture for exhibition at a famous gallery, where he hoped to gain the first prize. The woman resolved to spoil that picture, and she went about the work very cunningly. She did not meddle with the picture itself; all she did was to give the painter every day a cup of coffee, into which she put a small white powder. What harm could that do, you want to know. Wait awhile, and the story will tell. The painter labored diligently and was well satisfied with his work. He was so confident that he should succeed in carrying off the prize, that when his picture was hung in the gallery, he placed a curtain before it, which he did not mean to take down until the last moment before the judges gave their award. The other pictures seemed to him very badly colored; the trees in them were all yellowish, their flesh-color more like leathier than flesh, and the tint of their seas like that of boiled greens. He felt sure that his picture far excelled such sorry daubing.

When he drew aside the curtain from his picture he was gratified to see that a crowd quickly gathered round it; but the crowd did not admire. On the contrary, every one burst out laughing, and people called to their friends to come and look at this droll thing. His picture was entirely blue! What he had meant for flesh color was violet in shadow; what he had meant for emerald green was like blue ink; and his trees were of the tint of blue serge. Of course, he could not see that it was so, but his friends assured him of the fact. His enemy had poisoned his eyes with the powder, so that he saw everything as if through yellow spectacles. In a few days—taking no more of the powder—his sight was restored, and he saw how ridiculous was the picture he had painted.

The story may or may not be true, but it is quite possible, and I tell it you because, as a parable, it is entirely true. We are all painters at work upon a picture, and the picture is our own life and character. And our picture may be utterly spoiled if we take much of a certain powder. It will be more or less spoiled even if we take a little of it, and I am afraid that most of us take some. The powder is selfishness. How can we tell whether we have taken a good deal? If we have, we shall be like the painter in the story.

We shall think that our neighbors paint extremely ill. A very selfish boy (or man) has a bad opinion of other folk. He thinks that this one is greedy, and that one is a coward; that this one is mean and that one is quarrelsome. He sees faults and vices in everybody,

except those who flatter him. An unselfish person is known by the respect he has for others. He may not think them perfect, but he believes that there are some better than himself. A selfish person thinks in his heart that there is nobody with whom he has to do, who is so fine a fellow as himself. The story of the painter is a perfect parable in making him with his poisoned eyes regard every other's work as mean and poor.

It is a perfect parable in another respect. The painter did not know what a miserable daub his picture was until the time of judgment. It is possible that we may not know what our life and character really are until the great Judge pronounces sentence. Our Lord has told us that there will be much surprise in the day of Judgment. People who have imagined that they were good and religious will find themselves terribly mistaken. Others will be astonished to find that they have the approval of the Judge.

In one particular the story is not a perfect parable. An enemy gave the painter the poison. In real life it is our friends, or those who think themselves our friends, who give it to us. They magnify our worth, they excuse our faults, they overpraise our doings, they flatter our weakness; and, though they do so in kindness, they often do us harm. It seems nice to have such friends, but they are our worst enemies. "A spoiled child" too often becomes a madly selfish man or woman. If you have a friend or a teacher who points out your faults, you will be wise to listen to him or her, for when that is wisely and gently done it is the greatest kindness that can be shown to us.—*Independent (London).*

HOW THEY BELIEVE IN PRAYER.



STRANGE story of the belief of the heathen in prayer comes from India.

A woman came to a missionary at Bangalore asking him to interfere and prevent a certain catechist from praying for her any more. When asked how she knew that the catechist was praying for her, she replied, "I know it very well. I used to perform my worship to the idols quite comfortably, but for some time back I have not been able to do so. Besides, he told me at one time that he was praying for my family, and now my son and two daughters have become Christians. If he goes on praying, I shall be obliged to become a Christian too—I know I shall, and I don't want to. Please make him stop praying."