

any one to say a word in behalf of my client—a client in whose condition and treatment the whole human race is interested; men and women, old and young, the wise and the unwise, the civilized and the savage, in every clime and country under the sun. As I said before, it may be Quixotic in me. But I wage battle in defence of the LEFT HAND.

How is it that this excellent member of the human body is treated with an amount of neglect and injustice greater than is bestowed on any other? We make no distinction in our favours between the right eye and the left. The one can see as well as the other; and the left eye can appreciate the charms of a lovely woman or a beautiful landscape as well as the right. The left ear is as acutely susceptible of the sounds of pleasure or of pain as the right. In walking the left leg does as much duty as the right; and I have yet to learn that there is any difference between the left foot and the right, when they are alternately planted on the ground, either in running, leaping, or walking; and whether they do not equally well sustain the whole weight of the body, when the body requires their support. But, between the right hand and the left, there is an appreciable difference—a difference which I maintain to be the work of art, of prejudice, of habit, and of ignorance, and not of nature. It is true that the doctors sometimes tell us that the position of the heart on the left side of the body renders it desirable that we should not use the left hand so frequently and so constantly as the right, lest we should, somehow or other, damage, or weary, or interfere with the action of that most important organ. This is a statement which I should feel more inclined to respect, if the same reasoning were applied to the left leg. But the doctors do not go this length; and, with all deference to their superior knowledge of anatomy and physiology, I am unconvinced and incredulous on this subject, and think that the heart is made the scapegoat of a weakness of which it is not guilty, and that the left hand is the innocent victim of an unreasonable delusion.

The name of this neglected member of the human form divine is highly suggestive of the wrong committed against it. It is called the "left" because it is left out of the proper course of work and business; left out of consideration; left to neglect, and even to scorn. The Romans called it *sinister*, the French call it *gauche*, and the Germans *links*, none of which words convey the English meaning of abandonment. But, on the principle, too open and too commonly at work in the world, of giving a dog a bad name and then hanging him, the word "sinister" applied to the poor left hand, has come to signify any course of proceeding that is dark, wicked, or malignant. A man with a sinister expression of countenance is held to be the reverse of amiable or agreeable; and a "sinister" report, or rumour, is one that is laden with evil. To do a thing "over the left," means not to do it; a left-handed compliment is an insult in disguise; and a "left-handed" marriage is either no marriage at all, or a marriage which the lord of the creation who contracts it is much too high and mighty to avow. The "bar-sinister" in heraldry signifies illegitimacy; and "left" being in one sense the opposite of "right" has been held, with the grossest injustice, to be that other opposite of right which is designated as "wrong." When a man or woman is unfortunately in the position of a witness in a Court of Justice, he or she is told to hold the Bible in the right hand, before kissing the book—as if the left would vitiate the sanctity of the oath. The Mohammedans in a similar spirit will not even touch the Koran with the left hand on the most ordinary occasions. Poor left hand!

All faculties of mind and body suffer impairment and diminution from disease. No man or woman in civilised society can turn his or her ears backwards or forwards to catch a sound in either direction, as all wild animals can who live in a state of constant alarm or danger from their enemies. The savage aborigines of this continent, and other wild tribes in every part of the world where men are compelled to rely upon their own vigilance and strength for protection against opponents, are said to possess this faculty, which their civilised compeers, accustomed to rely upon the law and upon the police for their security against aggression, have completely lost. In like manner the blind, who are deprived of the most precious of all the faculties, are endowed with a more exquisite sensibility of touch and hearing than people who can see, simply because they are driven by painful necessity to cultivate and make the most of such faculties as remain.

One who is deprived of his right hand very speedily learns to use the left, and to apply it to every purpose of dexterity and skill, till he makes it as efficient as was its fellow. Children, when they first begin to take notice of the world in which they live, so commonly use both hands alike, that they have to be corrected by their parents or nurses and to be taught systematically to give the right hand the preference in conveying the food to their mouths, and never to let the left hand do that which it is the custom of society to perform with the right. We are told in the Book of Judges that during the fearful civil war between Israel and the tribe of Benjamin, there were seven hundred chosen men of the latter who were left-handed, and that every one of these warriors could "sling stones at an hair's breadth, and not miss." Thus each man was worth two in battle, because he had been trained to make his left hand equal to his right. If seven hundred men could have been thus educated, why not his right. If seven hundred men could have been thus educated, why not his right. If seven hundred men could have been thus educated, why not his right. There is no reason, but habit, prejudice and fashion; for the doctor's reason, *apropos* of the heart, I shall take the liberty of considering unfounded until it shall be satisfactorily proved in the case of any left-handed man or woman, that the action of his or her heart has been injuriously affected by his or her ambidexterity.

Of course all argument is vain on this subject. The old cannot learn, and the young will not. Besides, it may be replied that, all things considered, the world gets on very well as it is, although it only uses one-half of the manual skill with which Nature has endowed the lordly race that has subdued and replenished it. All this is true. Yet did not the world get on very well with oil-lamps, stage-coaches, hoys, and the semaphore, and without gas, rail-ways, steamships, and the electric telegraph? Let us be contented, however, and let us rejoice that fashion and prejudice have not done to the left eye, the left ear, the left nostril, the left leg and the left foot, the injustice they have done to the left hand.

But, after all, the whirligig of Fashion and prejudice has its revenge, as well as the whirligig of Time. If the male half of the world does such injustice to

itself as to sacrifice fifty per cent. of its working power, the female half of the world takes up the co-equal link that has been scorned, and makes it a beauty and a joy for ever. On the fourth finger of the hand which is not so greatly in danger of collision with the hard facts and hard implements of toil, as the hand that does the daily work of the world, the woman places the symbol of marriage, the plain gold ring, which it is the glory of a true woman to be privileged to wear; happiest of all, the happy she, if conjugal love on her part, and that of her husband, be as unalloyed with falsehood and change as the pure gold is with dross; and if the circle of their mutual confidence and affection be as complete, and without a break in its continuity, as the little circle which on the wished-for bridal morn her spouse placed upon her finger. It is a variety of the same old medical superstition, that has so largely helped to bring the left hand into disuse among mankind, that has helped the better and fairer half of mankind to make amends for the injustice done it. "The wedding ring," says an ancient author, "is worn on the fourth finger of the left hand, because it was formerly believed that a small artery ran from the finger to the heart. This," he adds, "is contradicted by experience; but several eminent authors, as well Gentiles as Christians, as well physicians as divines, were formerly of this opinion; and, therefore, they thought this finger the properest to bear this pledge of love that from thence it might be conveyed, as it were to the heart. I used to raise such as were fallen in a swoon by pinching this joint, and by rubbing the gold ring with a little saffron, for by this a restoring force passeth to the heart, and refresheth the fountain of life by which the finger is joined. Wherefore antiquity thought fit to compass it about with gold."

In our day the rubbing of the gold ring with a new dress, or with a set of diamonds, might possibly be more effective than the rubbing with saffron. But let that pass. The right hand may be given in marriage, but as far as the ladies are concerned, it is the left hand that confirms and seals the bargain.

Charles Mackay.

### KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM.

In this age of enlightenment and education, we do not require so much the knowledge of fact as to be impressed with the necessity of acting according to our knowledge, and to be roused to a life filled with the force of a will determined to do what we know to be right. This is not a want limited to any class, but is common to all. Think what a different world it would be if all would honestly concentrate all they know of what is good into outward and visible actions. And it is wonderful how such a course, steadily pursued, would add to our knowledge wisdom—for knowledge is the leaf and wisdom is the fruit—the genuine wisdom of loving God and keeping his commandments.

Take it for granted that all in this Christian land know what they ought to *do* and *be*. The Christian world has been teaching this for nineteen centuries, and what is the result? From the standpoint of one of the world's great writers, that "all religion has relation to life, and the life of religion is to do good," we must see in and around us a great many serious defects which ought to be helped by doing better. Business is too often so recklessly conducted that it proves a means of ruining thousands, and labour is undertaken in a spirit of doing as little as possible for the highest price attainable. Friendship means a hollow mask, or has its origin in self-interest; and love, that ought to be the purest and truest of earthly joys, has grown mercenary—or worse. Few really rejoice heartily in the success of another, and fewer still have the time and disposition to wait on, help, and encourage the worried, the disappointed and the sad. Self-interest seems to have the upper hand even with the best of us, and we feel we must not lose our business or position, or friends, for any secondary (?) considerations. Our churches are often too like the family circle they are so frequently and pathetically compared to, for in them there are dissensions, jealousies, a keeping up of false appearances, and a want of brotherly love, which is quite appalling and quite characteristic of too many households. Each member tries to make his own way in the world, and grabs at the fortunate chances in life, quietly leaving his poorer neighbour to his own resources, because the world has entered into the church more than the church has entered into the world. Even the Christian missionaries do not escape the searching eye of some of the public, who think they find in such enterprises more zeal for self than for our fellow-men.

As we think of all this, it seems as though we were listening to the weary sighing of a wintry wind as it sings its dreary dirge over the fallen leaves of summer. But surely such a state of affairs is unnecessary. Having had so much opportunity to know, is it not time now to try what doing will accomplish? Our actions make our life and show our character, and if self is all we think of and care for, we will soon become incapable of any genuine love, friendship, honesty or sincerity towards God or man. The almost daily prayer of all Christendom is: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven," and having said these perfect and comprehensive words, we seem satisfied to leave the result to "Our Father." But the man who truly prays this prayer, does not mock his Maker with a form of words, but tries, in all the acts of his daily life, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly, as is required of him. To be good is not a passive state, but one thoroughly active, it is to do good. The will of God is the same for earth as Heaven, and when we do that will, the Kingdom of Heaven is formed within us, a reign of love to God and love to man which is a life of manifest usefulness for the good of others in every way that comes in our power, even if we suffer in wealth or position, or in the estimation of others, or in any way whatever. If all were thoroughly impressed with the fact that our own personal conduct in doing what is good would bring about the answer to this prayer, why should we hesitate to act? Is it too practical? and does it involve too much self-denial? Is there not a lurking desire to wait for a change of affairs in the distant future, to be brought about by some legerdemain process that removes all present responsibility and trouble? And so we wait for eighteen hundred years and think all will come in "His own good time. But this time is always, to-day. Whenever any one wills to do good and does it, to him the Kingdom is come.