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ENFORCEMENT OF GENTLENESS.

Duke. What would you have? Your gentleness shall force,
More than your force move us to gentleness.
Orlando. I almost die for food, and let me have it.
Duke. Sit down and feed, and welcome to our table.
Orlando. Speak you so gently? Pardon me, I pray you;
I thought that all things had been savage here;
And therefore put I on the countenance
Of stern commandment. But, what'er you are,
That, in this desert inaccessible,
Under the shade of melancholy boughs,
Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time:
If ever you have looked on better days;
If ever been where bells have knolled to church;
If ever sat at any good man's feast;
If ever from your eye-lids wiped a tear,
And know what 'tis to pity, and be pitied;
Let gentleness my strong enforcement be:
In the which hope I blush and hide my sword.

As You Like It.

SHAKESPEARE here touches upon a principle which was announced in a very remarkable manner to mankind about one thousand six hundred years earlier, and which mankind have ever since paid a great theoretical respect to, but without ever making any thing like a hearty or general attempt to act upon it. To return good for evil—by soft words to turn away wrath—to charm our fellow-creatures out of violence into gentleness, by our own example—such are the leading features of this principle, the moral loveliness of which is acknowledged by all men—and yet all at the same time presume that, from defects in human character, it is not a doctrine capable of being realised in practice. We do, indeed, see the principle of force so universal throughout the world, that it is difficult to imagine how the frame of society could be kept together if the common motives of interest, praise, and terror, were to be given up. And yet the authority which sets forth the superior power of gentleness is the highest acknowledged by enlightened man; and he almost every day sees before his face, in his domestic and social existence, circumstances in which that power is practically shown in a more or less striking light. Moreover, is it quite rational to conceive that the race is capable of embracing and delighting in the principle of good will, and yet incapable of acting on it? Is not the same mental emotion which shows the truth and beauty of the doctrine, fit, under favourable circumstances, to lead men to make it a practical rule of life? Without stopping to agitate this question at present, we shall arrange a few rather remarkable exemplifications of the efficacy of the principle of gentleness, which have lately fallen under our attention.

Some of these examples are found in a place where we might have least expected them—a late extraordinary publication entitled "Memoirs of Joseph Holt, General of the Irish Rebels in 1798." This man, securing respect even as the chief of a rebel force, in consequence of the natural goodness that was in him, was spared by a vindictive government, and transported to New South Wales. In that colony he was employed as overseer on the property of a Mr. Cox, where he had under his charge forty-five convicts and twenty-five freemen. "It required all my energies," he says, "to keep them in proper order. My freemen I always employed by the piece, etc. As to the convicts, there was a certain quantity of work, which by the government regulations they must do in a given time, and this may be given to them by the day, week, or month, as you pleased, and they must be paid a certain price for all the work they did beyond a certain quantity. If they were idle, and did not do the regulated quantity of work, it was only necessary to take them before a magistrate, and he would order them twenty-five lashes of the cat on their backs, for the first offence, fifty for the second, and so on; and if that would not do, they were at last put into a gang, and made to work in irons from morning till night.

In order to keep them honest, I paid them fully and fairly for every thing they did beyond their stipulated task, at the same time I paid the freemen; and if I thought the rations not sufficient for their comfortable support, I issued to each man six pounds of wheat, fourteen of potatoes, and one of pork, in addition. By this means the men were well fed, for the old saying is true, 'Hunger will break through stone walls,' and it is all nonsense to make laws for starving men. When any article was stolen from me, I instantly paraded all hands and told them that, if it was not restored in a given time, I would stop all extra allowances and indulgences; 'the thief,' said I, 'is a disgrace to the establishment, and all employed in it; let the honest men find him out and punish him among yourselves; do not let it be said that the flogger ever polluted this place by his presence. You all know the advantages you enjoy above gangs on any other estate in the colony; do not then throw them away. Do not let me know who the thief is, but punish him by your own verdict.' I then dismissed them.

The transports would say among themselves, that what I had told them was all right. 'We won't,' they would reason, 'be punished because there happens to be an ungrateful thief among us.' They then called a jury, and entered into an investigation, and on all occasions succeeded in detecting and punishing the offender. I was by this line of conduct secure from plunder; and

the disgusting operation of flaying a man alive, with a cat-o'-nine-tails, did not disgrace the farms under my superintendance. Mr. Cox said one day to me, 'Pray, Joseph, how is it that you never have to bring your men to punishment? You have more under you than I believe any man in the colony, and to the surprise of all, you have never had one flogged, or indeed have made a complaint against one; they look well, and appear contented, and even happy.' 'Sir,' said I, 'I have studied human nature more than books. I had the management of many more men in my own country, and I was always rigidly just to them. I never oppressed them, or suffered them to cheat their employers or each other. They knew, if they did their duty, they would be well treated, and if not, sent to the right about. I follow the same course with the men here. * * I should think myself very ill qualified to act as your overseer, were I to have a man or two flogged every week. Besides the horrible inhumanity of the practice, the loss of a man's week or fortnight's work will not be a trifle in a year, at twelve and sixpence per week; for a man who gets the cat is incapable of work till his back is well; so, in prudence, as well as in Christian charity, it is best to treat our fellow-creatures like men, although they be degraded to the state of convict slaves.' * * "

Mr. Holt also gives the following account of Colonel Collins, governor of the settlement at the Derwent River in Van Dieman's Land from 1804 till his death in 1810:—"This gentleman had the good will, the good wishes, and the good word, of every one in the settlement. His conduct was exemplary, and his disposition most humane. His treatment of the runaway convicts was conciliatory, and even kind. He would go into the forests, among the natives, to allow these poor creatures, the runaways, an opportunity of returning to their former condition; and, half dead with cold and hunger, they would come and drop on their knees before him, imploring pardon for their behaviour.

"Well," he would say to them, "now that you have lived in the bush, do you think the change you made was for the better? Are you sorry for what you have done?" "Yes, sir." "And will you promise never to go away again?" "Never, sir." "Go to the store-keeper, then," the benevolent Collins would say, "and get a suit of slops and your week's ration, and then go to the overseer and attend to your work. I give you my pardon; but remember, that I expect you will keep your promise to me."

"I never heard of any other governor or commandant acting in this manner, nor did I ever witness much leniency from any governor. I have, however, been assured that there was less crime, and much fewer faults committed among the people under Governor Collins, than in any other settlement, which I think is a clear proof that mercy and humanity are the best policy."

Miss Martineau, in her works on America, gives several delightful illustrations of this principle, which almost sound like oddities. She speaks of a Quaker, a kind of Baptist, whom she found in the enjoyment of considerable wealth, on a farm settlement near Michigan city. "He had gone through life on the non-resistance principle; and it was animating to learn how well it had served him—as every high exercise of faith does serve every one who has strength and simplicity of heart to commit himself to it. It was animating to learn, not only his own consistency, but the force of his moral power over others; how the careless had been won to thoughtfulness of his interests, and the criminal to respect of his rights. He seemed to have unconsciously secured the promise and the fruit of the life that now is, more effectually than many who think less of that which is to come. It was done, he said, by always supposing that the good was in men." In her notice of the relation between mistresses and servants in America, Miss Martineau states that much of what English people have to complain of in that country, in respect of servants, arises from their imperious and exacting habits, irreconcilable as these are with the natural rights of their fellow-creatures. Where servants are treated upon a principle of justice and kindness, they live on agreeable terms with their employers often for many years. But even slaves may be made more useful as well as more agreeable companions, when treated in such a way as to call forth their better feelings. "A kind-hearted gentleman in the south, finding that the laws of his state precluded his teaching his legacy of slaves according to the usual methods of education, bethought himself at length of the moral training of task-work. It succeeded admirably. His negroes soon began to work as slaves are never, under any other arrangement, seen to work. Their day's task was finished by eleven o'clock. Next, they began to care for one another: the strong began to help the weak—first, husbands helped their wives; then parents helped their children; and at length the young began to help the old. Here was seen the awakening of natural affections which had lain in a dark sleep."

"The vigour," says Miss Martineau elsewhere, "which negroes show when their destiny is fairly placed in their own hands, is an answer to all arguments about their helplessness drawn from their dulness in a state of bondage. A highly satisfactory experiment upon the will, judgment, and talents of a large body of slaves, was made, a few years ago, by a relative of Chief Justice Marshall. This gentleman and his family had attached their negroes to them by a long course of judicious kindness. At length an

estate at some distance was left to the gentleman, and he saw, with much regret, that it was his duty to leave the plantation on which he was living. He could not bear the idea of turning over his people to the tender mercies or unproved judgment of a stranger overseer. He called his negroes together, told them the case, and asked whether they thought they could manage the estate themselves. If they were willing to undertake the task, they must choose an overseer from among themselves, provide comfortably for their own wants, and remit him the surplus of the profits. The negroes were full of grief at losing the family, but willing to try what they could do. They had an election for overseer, and chose the man their master would have pointed out; decidedly the strongest head on the estate. All being arranged, the master left them, with a parting charge to keep their festivals and take their appointed holidays, as if he were present. After some time, he rode over to see how all went on, choosing a festival-day, that he might meet them in their holiday gaiety. He was surprised, on approaching, to hear no merriment; and on entering his fields, he found his 'force' all hard at work. As they flocked round him, he inquired why they were not making holiday. They told him that the crop would suffer in its present state by the loss of a day; and that they had therefore put off their holiday, which, however, they meant to take by and bye. Not many days after, an express arrived to inform the proprietor that there was an insurrection on his estate. He would not believe it; declared it impossible, as there was nobody to rise against; but the messenger, who had been sent by the neighbouring gentlemen, was so confident of the facts, that the master galloped, with the utmost speed, to his plantation, arriving as night was coming on. As he rode in, a cry of joy arose from his negroes, who pressed round to shake hands with him. They were in their holiday clothes, and had been singing and dancing; they were only enjoying the deferred festival. The neighbours, hearing the noise on a quiet working-day, had jumped to the conclusion that it was an insurrection.

"There is no catastrophe yet to this story. When the proprietor related it, he said that no trouble had arisen; and that for some reason, ever since this estate had been wholly in the hands of his negroes, it had been more productive than it ever was while he managed it himself."

It is particularly striking to find the principle thus exemplified in dealings with convicts and slaves, for, if there successful, it has surely a chance of being still more so amongst classes less degraded. But there is still a more apparently hopeless set of beings, upon whom the genial beams of the sun of kindness have wrought a regenerating effect. This is the class of extremely depraved criminals—men whom it is customary to treat with coercion and every kind of bitterness, with a view to subdue and frighten, if not to improve them, and who in general show the natural fruits of that species of treatment in deeper and deeper criminality. In the Weathersfield prison in the United States, a Captain Pillsbury has tried a soothing and benevolent system with this class of men; and the effects are thus spoken of by Miss Martineau:—"For these cases see the article entitled 'The Prisoner's Friend' in the present volume of the Pearl, page 116].

There is still another class of beings, usually reckoned low in the moral scale, upon whom a mild treatment has been found to be of better effect than a harsh one—the natives of what are called savage countries. Civilised settlers in such countries have always, till a recent period, proceeded upon the principle that a system of armed offence and defence was the only one that could be maintained with natives; and the consequences have invariably been, great bloodshed on both sides, and a slow progress in colonisation. Such a system was no doubt unavoidable, as long as the superior race was pleased to look upon the natives as a set of beings without rights, and without natural feelings. They have invariably robbed, insulted, and enslaved the aborigines, and have reaped the natural fruits of a system of violence and injustice. The late Mr Thomas Pringle, as fine a spirit as ever glowed in behalf of injured humanity, in his work entitled "African Sketches," forcibly points out the evil effects which have hitherto attended the violent system in the colony of the Cape of Good Hope, and expresses his firm conviction, founded on many years of experience and observation on the spot, that justice and mild treatment are the talismans which are to open the African continent to British enterprise.

We present these views and their appropriate illustrations with hesitation and timidity, for, to confess the truth, it appears, after all we have known of mankind, as if it were too good news to be true, that they could live and deal with each other on principles of pure justice and benevolence. But if there is any such system in store for man as was preached so many centuries ago in Galilee, and seems to be revealed in very action in these cases, how wonderfully glorious a prospect does it open up to us! One reflection may be adduced as calculated to keep up our hopes of so beautiful a consummation. The present is but a fallacious argument of the future. Who, so lately as the beginning of the reign of George III., could have believed it possible, considering the prevailing sentiments of mankind, that any steps should ever be taken to put an end to negro slavery? The Edinburgh Review, about the year 1809, draws an argument against all pro-