

SELFISHNESS.

THIS vice permeates all grades of society. It shows itself in early childhood and is the source of many a conflict in the nursery and school-room. It is a potent factor in the great thoroughfares of life. We may safely say that merchants, lawyers, doctors, ministers and students—all classes, rich and poor, ignorant and learned, are more or less selfish. In its minor forms, to which we mean chiefly to refer at present, it is closely allied to rudeness, and like every other sin proves unprofitable to the one who indulges in it. The southern Planter who along with his neighbor was joint owner of a slave and selfishly inserted the carefully restricted petition in his daily prayers—"Lord bless my share of nigger Bob,"—made a mistake from a business standpoint. The fact is that our share of things in the great social compact cannot be rigidly separated from what belongs to others. Complete isolation in this respect is impossible.

The man who resolves to ignore the interests of others takes the most effectual way of injuring his own. He, for example, who in the exercise of a kind of vulgar independence disregards the common civilities of life and delights in being rude in dress, in speech and conduct, is sure to meet with retribution. It matters not that he tries to defend himself on the score of conscientiousness and religious transparency; others see in his behaviour the essence of selfishness or boorishness and treat him accordingly. One's own little wants, comforts and interests, are not the loftiest themes that can occupy his soul. It requires but small talent and very limited education to think of these things. The lower animals by the exercise of mere instinct are able to attend to them.

You see the very incarnation of this small spirit of selfishness in the fop with jewelled fingers, ornamented figure, and empty brain, by whom you are jostled in the street and deprived of your rightful share of the pavement.

Is it not this same spirit that actuates the great army of smokers who persist in forcing you to breathe the fumes you detest, but in which they delight? Why should they selfishly disregard the fact that the atmosphere in our streets, hotels, and public conveyances, is common property and not to be defiled and rendered offensive in order to gratify the artificial taste of any class of citizens?

Who has not seen selfishness dominant at the railway station when the rush was made for the ticket office and the lunch room? We have seen on the St. Lawrence steamers between Kingston and Montreal persons who, when at home were doubtless counted ladies and gentlemen, not pressed by pangs of hunger but animated by mean selfishness, holding fast chairs in the saloon for an hour before dinner despite the remonstrance of the steward and the attractive scenery of the rapids. We have looked with suppressed wonder upon a portly person suffering naturally from internal heat, heavily clad in furs, sitting in

a heated railway car—perspiring—and instead of divesting herself of superfluous clothing, throwing up the window and allowing a deadly stream of cold air to strike her neighbors on the opposite side. What selfishness!

We have been in churches where saintly people so far forgot what was due to the sanctuary and to their fellow-worshippers as to enter habitually five or ten minutes after the appointed hour. We have been in drawing-rooms where even eminent men were so obtrusively conspicuous lounging in chairs and sofas and strolling about with their hands in their pockets, and where pious divines were so noisy and all absorbing in speech as to make us wish intensely for a more general appreciation of the golden rule.

Great men, and possibly some of our readers, may deem all these things trifles. Be it so. They cannot deny the fact that even contemptible creatures, such as black flies and mosquitoes, are very annoying and destructive to domestic and social comfort. And more still. These trifles undeniably spring from the same root as the gigantic evils against which great ethical and religious reformers lay out their strength. The cruel merchant of Venice with his ducats and his pound of flesh held up to everlasting reprobation by the great English dramatist is only an exaggerated type of mean selfishness. The huge monopolies, under whose arbitrary sway many a country has groaned, are just the same.

We do not oppose great reforms by which such are to be removed. No. Let us by all means destroy if we can every tyrannical form of organized evil. But let us not at the same time overlook the little world in which we ourselves live and move. Let us not pass over or regard as disguised forms of virtue those minute and insidious manifestations of selfishness with which society abounds.

BETA.

A NEEDED REFORM.

WE live in an age in which everything is subjected to the keenest scrutiny, and nothing tolerated or condemned without careful examination. Church and State customs, hoary with age, are now exposed to the merciless fusillade of public criticism. Long established habits and manners of life are called in question, and measured by the standard of right and wrong, of good and evil. No objection can be taken to all this, for it is time the world were freed from the bondage of any practice, however universal, which cannot bear the searching test of inquiry. It is a matter for congratulation, therefore, that the Christian Church has at last been awakened in some sense to the enormities of intemperance, and especially that instances of drunkenness in the pulpit are almost unknown in modern times. Still, I am satisfied that temperance principles admit of a far wider application than they generally receive. The use of intoxicating