

of the Pharisees. This is surely a strange exception to be taken by one who is himself a generous denouncer of tyranny and oppression. I have little doubt that had no indignation against sanctimonious crime been exhibited, its absence would have been seized upon as a proof of imperfect humanity. The second defect alleged is the absence of mirth, and of laughter as its natural and genial manifestation. This objection, though it grates strangely on our ears, is not unreasonable. Mirth is a real part of our moral nature, significant as well as the rest. The great ministers of pure and genial mirth, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Molière, have fulfilled a mission of mercy and justice as well as of pleasure to mankind, and have their place of honour in history with the other great benefactors of the race. And, on the other hand, the attempts to expel mirth from human life and character made by certain austere sects, have resulted not only in moroseness, but in actual depravity. If this element of good in history is really alien to the Christian type, the Christian type is imperfect; we shall have a moral type beside it and beyond it, and at a certain point we shall become aware of its imperfection, and our absolute allegiance to it will cease.

But before determining this question, the objector would have done well to inquire what mirth really was; whether it was a radically distinct feeling, or only a phase of feeling; and whether laughter was of its essence or only an accident? Mirth, pity and contempt seem to be three emotions which are all excited by human weakness. To weakness add suffering, and mirth is turned to pity; add vice, and mirth is turned to contempt. Mirth itself is excited by weakness alone, which it discriminates alike from the weakness of vice on the one hand, and from weakness attended by suffering on the other. The expression of contempt is a sarcastic laughter, akin to the laughter of mirth, and the milder form of pity betrays itself in a smile. There is, moreover, evidently a close connection between laughter and tears. Pity, not mirth, would be the characteristic emotion of one who was brought habitually into contact with the weakness of humanity in the form of suffering; but the same power of sympathy would render him capable of genial mirth if brought into contact with weakness in a merely grotesque and comic form. According as the one or the other was his lot, his character would take a brighter or a sadder hue; but we cannot help feeling that the lot of man here, having more in it of the painful than of the laughable, the sadder character is the more sympathetic, the more human, and