

misinterpreted or misunderstood by the thoughtful observer, whatever his theological or religious position.

Thus it is quite certain and evident that exercise—or labour, which is the same thing—is indispensable, in order to the development and perfection of the powers with which we are endowed. It is by means of exercise that our bodily frame grows up to its normal size and proportions. Each limb puts forth its strength as it is called into exercise; and if any part or member of the body is neglected, it is stunted and maimed. So it is with the powers of the whole man, body as well as soul. We have only to let them lie torpid in order to paralyze them, perhaps ultimately to destroy them altogether. We must live before we can work; but life which does not express itself in work, in energy, speedily sinks into a state which is no better than death.

So, too, labour is a source of happiness, both negatively and positively. From our earliest days we have been reminded of the "mischief" which our adversary finds "for idle hands to do"; and there can be little doubt that many of us would have been better men if we had had more work on our hands, and many of us would have been worse men if we had had less. But this is only one, and the less important, side of the matter. There is a positive blessing and joy and delight in work. "We are accustomed," says a French writer, "to place idleness among the beatitudes of heaven; we ought rather to put it among the penalties of hell." It is no new discovery that action leads to happiness. It is indeed an argument as old as Aristotle, that it is for this reason that pleasure is essentially a good, because it is connected with the development of our being, and is the natural consequence of action.

"Pleasure," he says,* "finishes and completes the action. . . . It is an end which joins itself with the other qualities as bloom is joined with youth. Why is not pleasure continual? Because none of the human faculties are capable of continual action." On subjects like these there is hardly room for difference of opinion. It is not merely the reasoning of philosophers, but the experience of mankind which proves that the most perfect happiness results from the harmonious activity of the powers of our nature.

If we may add to these considerations, we should remind ourselves of one argument for labour which will never be ignored by our neighbours, however little they may be capable of entering into the philosophical aspect of the matter. Labour is a contribution which every one is bound to make to the supply of the needs of the world. And no one can refuse to pay this debt without incurring the charge of dishonesty. So long as we live we are sustained by the products of labour. We know that God could have made provision for us, as for the flowers of the field, without subjecting us to the necessity of toil. The fact that he has not done so is the best proof of the utility of labour. We are, then, not only breaking His law, we are also robbing humanity when we live on the fruits of other men's labours, and refuse to make any contributions of our own towards the general stock upon which all subsist.

We cannot better bring this part of our subject to a close than by quoting the well-known trenchant and pregnant words of Mr. Carlyle.† "Two men," he says, "I honour, and no third. First, the toilworn craftsman that with earth-made implement labor-

* *Eth. Nic.* x. 4. 5. Cf. Janet, *Theory of Morals* i. 4

† *Sartor Resartus*, iii. 4.