

ceptions instantly arrest our attention, while they suggest to our minds emotions of shrinking and of awe. The eagle, soaring lonely among the crags and peaks of his native wilderness, is an object possessed of a certain savage majesty which compels our admiration, but repels our sympathies. The raven, perched upon the lightning-blasted tree, or croaking suddenly from the sole surviving turret of a palace in ruins, has been in all ages the chosen and acceptable symbol of doom and death and woe,—while, on the other hand, half the pleasure which we derive from the contemplation of the beauties of a landscape consists in the sounds indicative of fellowship among its living occupants which greet the ear, the lowing of the herded kine, the multitudinous bleating of the sheep-fold, the reapers' song, and the blended minstrelsy of the feathered tribes. Alike in nature as in man, prevails the royal law of sympathy.

Religion discloses to the sympathetic soul deeper sources of sympathy, suggests a purer, holier joy, a more pensive and expansive sorrow than that engendered by the mere human impulse. The inspired apostle here enjoins us to rejoice and weep together in a higher than a mere worldly sense. That man is a monster who is totally incapable of sympathizing with his fellows, and he is an essentially wicked man who strives to repress and stifle all such generous feelings. All nature teaches us—the fish that swims, the bird that flies, every four-footed creature after his kind—that when we seek to shut up the sluices of our sympathy we do wrong to our better selves, and commit an offence against Him who planted the soul in man and endowed it so prodigally with affections and desires.

But there is, notwithstanding, much of what is false and unreal in the tears and the smiles of men. We oftentimes are sad when joy should reign in our hearts and light up our countenances; we rejoice and make merry when the silent and dejected air of sorrow would best become us. How frightful is the mirth of the maniac, when he laughs aloud at some fantastic creature of his brain, or at some obscure and eccentric sally of his crazy humor! How the blood of the listener is chilled by the sounds of that hideous merriment, betokening as they do that unconsciousness on the part of the sufferer of his true state, which is the most mournful because the most hopeless feature of the malady! He chuckles and laughs and shouts in the very excess of his joy; feature and gesture and voice are alike tasked to the utmost to give expression to his exaggerated mood of mirth; all the while that in what constitutes the dignity and the power of man, he is so piteous a wreck, that except in the mere external form and lineament, he is immeasurably beneath the beasts that perish. It is not seldom that, in a religious point of view, the laughter of even sane men has madness in it. How true is it that a soul in a state of hostility to God and truth is fatuous and impotent, wholly addicted to wild vagaries

and delusive fancies; and how melancholy is it to see such a soul smiling amidst the ruin which it is, smiling while the toils of its enemy are enveloping it round about, and his arm is out-stretched to seize the prey, and his eye is kindling into a deadly glare of eagerness and expectation. Surely this is the mirth of the madman—this is the weird laughter of a maniac soul. Not amidst the blaze of the festive hall, not in the whirl of the giddy dance, not even when the wine glows in the brimming cup, and the song and the jest in the boisterous gaiety of “flushed and crowded wassailers” do much abound, not even then can the man who has neglected to make his peace with God be said to be happy. With him the Christian sympathizer cannot sympathize. His mirth is not true mirth, his joy is not rejoicing. The outer life may be gay and sparkling, while the inner and noblest immortal life is being consumed by a fatal but unfeigned disease: the sepulchre may be whited, but it is not the less full of dead men's bones and rottenness: the merriment may be loud and jocund, but to the ear of the Christian it has all the discordance and incoherence of insanity.

Nor is the sorrow of the unrepentant more real or more true. With those who do not weep after a godly sort—with those who, when they mourn, turn not their faces heavenward, the believer has no sympathy. Affliction, in some shape or form, is the inheritance of fallen humanity; but, while all are afflicted, all are not alike affected by the stripes of the rod. The cause being the same, the results are radically different in different cases; the treatment being the same there is a wide dissimilarity between the *diagnoses* of the patients. With some tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope—a hope which maketh not ashamed. With others it engenders angry and rebellious feelings—feelings as if a wrong had been done and an injury inflicted. He who does not recognise the desert of punishment—who will not admit that he cannot answer for one of a thousand of his faults, that the rod only smites the back of an offender, and is wielded by the hand of supreme and infinite love and wisdom, is no child of heaven. He is a miserable rebel, contumacious as he is weak and wayward, without hope, without consolation, without God in the world. His sorrow worketh impatience and fretfulness and folly, makes him tenfold more the child of disobedience and of wrath, engenders despair for hope, infidelity for faith. Such a man cannot be said to weep even when his eyes stream with tears and the voice of his lamentation is loud and dismal. In bereavement, in misfortune, in sickness, in every form of affliction he is not afflicted. The visible symbols of woe may be his—the hanging head, the rueful look, the frantic gesture, the sable trappings; but the spirit of resignation which alike constitutes and consecrates true sorrow, which deepens and intensifies the feeling, while it