

the madness of laughter, there is that which will cast shadows on the fancy, shadows rendered the more intense by the brilliancy of the reverse. When the voices of gaiety are the most tumultuous, peals of merriment the most prolonged, whisperings of thought will often come to the inner spirit, which, with indistinct but passionate utterance, sober the heart like a distant song, and excite it to ponderings and musings that the viol and the harp cannot drive away or silence. Christianity, in this, as in all things else, consecrates the solemnity of nature. Saint Paul speaks of marriage as a mystery. The largest section of the Christian Church regards it as a sacrament. Jesus himself sanctified it with his presence.

More sacred, still, are the affections and the objects which a genuine home contains. There is conjugal affection—in its truth and its devotion; in friendship, the most constant, the most enduring, and the most inspired. There is parental affection—the nearest image upon earth of God's disinterested goodness; and like that goodness, an impenetrable mystery of love. The father under its influence shrinks from no toil; complains of no privation, and, if he can but bless his offspring, he is greatly happy.—The mother, too, is there in the strength of her love and meekness:—that love which awaits them, and receives them into life with a passion of desire: which watches them with a sleepless patience onward to maturity;—nor quits them, even then;—but still grieves or exults in their misfortunes or success: and that heart, which in the freshness of maternity took more gladness from the infant's smile than the praise of monarchs could have given it, bounds elastic from the chill of age, at any good tidings from the man or woman that once was folded to its beatings: ay, and as once it bled at that infant's slightest hurt, it still can sicken and can break for that man or woman's misery or sin. There is filial affection, also, which answers to parental, though with no equal force. There, besides, is the frank regard of brother for brother; the gentle attachment of sister to sister; above all, that peculiar, that heavenliest of sympathies,—the sympathy which lies between a brother and a sister—in which the spirits of man and woman are united with a tenderness, and beauty, and unselfishness—not found in aught beside on earth, or lower than the angels.—And there is childhood with all the graces of innocence and light around it. There it is, with its tears and smiles: there it is, with its prattle and its glee ringing sweet music upon the coldest ear: there it is, with its sorrows and its pains winning pity from the sternest bosom: there it is,

demanding toil which it is happiness to exert, and praying for it with caresses, which it is blessing to receive; there it is, unconsciously in union with the holy and unseen, in the first joy of being perfecting its Maker's praise: there it is, giving free expression to nature, and showing before perversion, how excellent that nature is: there it is, as yet un-schooled in the sophistications of the world, with its fearless speech, its bold sincerity, its colourless truthfulness; there it is, with its sensibility to the beautiful and the good, with instructive appreciation of the generous and the right; amazed at inconsistencies, which, quick to apprehend, it is, puzzled to explain, and which, the less it can understand, the more it ponders. There it is fastening itself to our hearts by its very faults; pulling down the imagined triumphs of our virtue by its simple goodness, setting at naught our boasted courage by its heroic patience and endless fortitude; shaming the varieties of our science by the depths of its untaught wisdom; there it is, exciting by turns our hope, and our fear; a hope, which our experience but too sadly overclouds, a fear which the same experience but too bitterly inspires.

The relation of home to the individual, in the lowest sense, is that of a natural necessity; but, in a higher view, it is one of incalculable moral import. The excellence of a right home for training and for example, is so obvious that it is sufficient, merely to mention, and to pass it. But the simply negative conditions of such a home are of unspeakable advantage. There is nothing in it to pervert; there is nothing in it to obstruct. Whatever the individual is capable of being, he is not hindered from being: and he has such aids, moreover, that he may best be that for which he has the most capacity.—Passing by the instances in which souls have been from the outset crushed down by death and ignorance, I am convinced that most of our intellectual and moral failures throughout life may be traced to distortions of the spiritual nature in the early home. There have been minds, I am persuaded, that nothing else could have injured, that have by this been utterly destroyed. There have been minds, which, had they been thrown naked on the world, with only their own unharmed impulses and vigour, that would have gone bravely onward, and gained, as they advanced, trophies, not only of virtue, but of genius. There have been minds which no shackle could have held in the hour of their strength, which yet could never rid themselves from the bondage of first impressions; and the very finest minds, primitively of the most