

LIBERALITY.

LIBERALITY, like great and small, is a relative term. It cannot be measured by the gift of any definite sum. That which may be an evidence of great liberality in one man, may evince in another a penurious disposition. In some cases, they who give the smallest sums give relatively the most, since, like the poor widow who cast two mites into the treasury, they give from their necessity, that which they actually need for other purposes.

Many of the larger bestowments made to the Lord's treasury are presented without the sacrifice of a comfort or a luxury; they are given from an "abundance," and cost the donor nothing but the thought of parting with the money. Some have said that "a donation must be characterized, not by the sum given, but by that which is left in the donor's possession after the bestowment has been made." We object to such a manner of estimating a gift, since it would seem to imply that every man's requirements are alike, and that a rich man must impoverish himself before he can be as liberal as his poor neighbour. It should not be overlooked that some men require more than others to go on with; their business may require a larger capital; their position in society may need a greater expenditure. The moral value of a gift, however, must in some sort be estimated by the sacrifice it necessitates. Simply giving what can very well be spared, that which is not actually needed, and involves no self-denial, cannot entitle an individual to so high a character for liberality as a sum given which is needed by the donor, and the giving of which incurs the surrender of a comfort or necessity. The man who barely lives on his income gives out of his necessity, while he who has a surplus to lay by gives from his abundance; yet the former is often urged to give more, and the stimulus of the rich man's larger donation is freely applied. The smallness of sums collected in some churches is a matter of remark, and sometimes of censure; some of them are quite too small, no doubt. The method, however, of estimating the liberality of the body by the subscription list is not a fair or correct way of judging. If all things were fairly taken into consideration it may be found that some who figure high, do but little; while some of those who subscribe but little, do much.

We do not think any do too much for benevolent objects; that is not one of the sins to which we are prone, nor is there a tendency to it which will need to be checked; it is, indeed, quite the other way. Men need to be gently pressed up to this duty, and *gentle* pressure will not always secure the end. It is, however, very desirable that the pressure should be fairly applied. It does not follow that because little is obtained from some quarters, that pressure would get more, since the little may be all; nor is it to be inferred that no further pressure is needed where much has already been got, for there may be abundance left. Of this matter they can judge best who are somewhat acquainted with the means and circumstances of the donors. It is doubtless important that men everywhere should have a just apprehension of duty with regard to this subject. Men, however, are differently constituted, and their modes of thought on these matters are varied. Some men give generously and pleasantly, others can scarcely be said to give at all; something may be obtained from their purse and hand by pressure, but their hearts yield nothing but a sigh, and their lips a groan or a grumble, while the unwilling offering is extracted. Some have so habituated themselves to complain when the cause of God demands their support, that,