

son of moral with physical diseases. It is perfectly natural that a highly sympathetic and kind-hearted man, engaged for many years in the study and practice of the healing art, should not only represent moral depravity as a disease, but that he should carry his illustration farther than minds unbiassed in this direction can follow him. For the invariable tendency of medical practice is to prevent a physician altogether from considering the notion of responsibility in connection with the disease of his patient. He accepts this abnormal condition simply as a physical fact, and not at all as a moral one. He treats the wounds of a murderer as carefully and with as little aversion or reluctance as those of the murderer's victims. It is an article of his professional code not to allow the notion of desert to influence his treatment in the slightest degree. His duty, as he considers it, is to restore the patient without regard to the moral antecedents of the case. Thus it comes that Dr. Holmes does not give due weight to the fact that as physical disease is very often the result of the patient's own folly and negligence, so also moral diseases are frequently incurred.

Men often become vicious against the influences of heredity and environment. They wilfully change a moral environment for an immoral one. They reach the vicious state not at once, but by a long series of acts, more or less immoral, and too often consciously and willingly performed. The fact that sin and crime follow the law of cause and effect does not at all touch the responsibility of the agent who himself creates these causes.

We object strongly to another sentiment that pervades these books. Oliver Wendell Holmes is generally spoken of as an exceedingly genial and kindly man, and perhaps in the main this is a true estimate of him. But there are many indications that this kindness is extended for the most part only to the

limited class of which he himself is a fair representative—an aristocracy in fact, not indeed of wealth or title, but of intellect and "family."

Instead of kindly sympathy with the aspirations of the humble, our author too often displays egotistic ridicule and contemptuous disregard. Their weak and hampered efforts at betterment are simply ludicrous to him, and fair subjects of heartless burlesque. He sees nothing commendable, nothing pathetic, in it at all. Intelligently liberal as he is on most topics, his perverse inconsistency on the matter of social canons and distinctions is most surprising. To him these arbitrary and fluctuating conventions are absolutely right, and eternally fixed and unalterable. He speaks oracularly of "the natural lines of cleavage in a society which has crystallized according to its own true laws." (*The Autocrat*.) "Natural," "true," indeed! But what is natural? and what is true? were very pertinent questions here. These words are so exceedingly ambiguous that they often are used as the only support of a weak argument. They are good words to conjure with when reasons fail. For has not all social progress consisted in the overthrow of a state of things which was previously considered by the ignorant to be perfectly natural? Witches, for example, were once supposed to be a natural element of society. Doubtless if Dr. Holmes had been living in those days, it would have been natural for him to help to drown them.

It may further be natural, and it may be according to his view of the true laws of society, but it is not therefore admirable, for him to make so many sneering allusions to "beings that ate with knives and said 'Haow,'" the "Poor Relation," the "rural districts," the "large-handed bumpkins," and so on.

How exceedingly foolish our author could be at times is evident from this passage in "*The Autocrat*":—