

AFFECTATION OF INDIFFERENCE.

THERE has risen up within my memory a habit, an affectation of indifference, if you like to call it so, to all things on this earth; which indifference is born of a corrupt and degraded heart, and of satiated and exhausted appetites. To a high mind, furnished with keen and vigorous faculties, nothing on earth can be indifferent; for acuteness of perception, a quality which in its degree assimilates us to the Divine nature, weighs all distinctions. As God himself sees all the qualities of everything, whether minute or great, and gives them their due place, so the grander and more expansive the intellect may be, the more accurately it feels, perceives, and estimates the good or evil of each individual thing. The low and the base, the pallid taste of luxury, the satiated sense of licentiousness, the callous heart of selfishness, the blunted sensibilities of lust, covetousness, gluttony, effeminacy and idleness, take refuge in indifference, and call it to their aid, lest vanity, the weakest but the last point to become hardened in the heart of man, should be wounded. They take for their protection the shield of a false and tinsel wit, the answer of a sneer, the argument of a supercilious look, and try to glaze over everything to themselves and others, with a contemptuous persiflage, which confounds all right and wrong.—*G. P. R. James.*

ON JUDGING JUSTLY.

A perfectly just and sound mind is a rare and invaluable gift. But it is still much more unusual to see such a mind unbiassed in all its actings. God has given this soundness of mind to but few; and a very small number of those few, escape the bias of some predilection, perhaps habitually operating; and none are at all times, perfectly free. I once saw this subject forcibly illustrated. A watch-maker told me that a gentleman had put an exquisite watch into his hands, that went irregularly. It was as perfect a piece of work as was ever made. He took it to pieces, and put it together again twenty times. No manner of defect was to be discovered and yet the watch went intolerably. At last it struck him that possibly the balance-wheel might have been near a magnet. On applying a needle to it he found his suspicions true. Here was all the mischief. The steel works in the other parts of the watch had a perpetual influence on its motions; and the watch went as well as possible with a new wheel. If the soundest mind be magnetised by any predilections, it must act irregularly.—*Cecil.*

MAN'S SUPERIORITY.

Man having thus settled to his own entire satisfaction the question of the weakness and inferiority of woman, and everything being done that training could do to produce such results as confirmed his conclusion, it necessarily followed that she was unfit to cope with the world or resist the manifold dangers and temptations that surrounded her; and it was accordingly found necessary to hem her in by decorums and circumscribe her by conventionalities, which altogether precluded her from that self-education by experience, which the more active life of man afforded him. Frightened by his own vices and the weakness of the creature to whose keeping he must needs confide his honour and peace, he saw nothing left for it but turn the world into one large harem; perpetuating woman's slavery by perpetuating her ignorance; and teaching her, whilst he assumed a divine right to despotic sway, that it was the worst of treasons to herself—that is, that it was *unfeminine*—to dispute his claims. In short, he only discerned two functions for which woman could have been designed; namely, to be the slave of his passions, and the nurse of his babies in swaddling-clothes; and for these purposes he sought to adapt her—he fitted her “to suckle fools;” and verily he hath his reward—for she has done it!—*Mrs. Crowe.*

Few men have done more harm than those who have been thought to be able to do least; and there cannot be a greater error than to believe a man whom we see qualified with too mean parts to do good, to be therefore incapable of doing hurt; there is a supply of malice, of pride, of industry, and even of folly, in the meekest, when he sets his heart upon it, that makes a strange progress in wickedness.—*Clarendon.*

THE COURAGE OF CANDOUR.

Strange that it should be so!—What do we study metaphysics for, or read novels—which should be metaphysics in action—but to get a peep into men's minds and motives? and if possible, if we were quite sure they would tell us their minds and motives, we might be more patient. But there is the rub—who dare be candid, except to some rare soul to whom we can speak as to our conscience! Men flee the Truth, and are so unaccustomed to her face, that it affrights them. We live in a continual seeming, and they are considered the safest and surest in society who practise this seeming with the most unvarying fidelity. The outspokeners are all sufferers by their honesty; they are not “dwellers in decencies;” and, whilst they rend their own veil, every man trembles for the integrity of his. Time and experience teach them prudence; till, at length, they learn to accommodate themselves to the climate; like some poor tropical plant, that is obliged to modify its nature to new circumstances, and cease to shed its flowers and fruits in an ungenial atmosphere.

ROYAL MASONIC BENEVOLENT ANNUITY FUND.

ON Friday the sixth annual general meeting of members of this charity was held at the Freemason's Hall, for general business, and the election by ballot of twelve annuitants from a list of 51 candidates; W. John Savage, Esq. in the chair. The institution was founded for the purpose of granting annuities to reduced, aged, or afflicted Freemasons, in proportion to their age or circumstances, in sums varying in amount from £10 to £30 per annum. The report stated that last year there were 39 annuitants, at a charge of £720, which 7 deaths had reduced to 32, which, with yesterday's election, would make 44 annuitants for the present year. The receipts from all sources were £1,844 4s 10d, which, after expenditure, left a balance of £929 1s 2d, of which balance the committee had ordered to be invested £500, in addition to a funded capital of £5000. The business of the day being concluded, thanks were voted to the chairman.—*Standard.*

THE DEAD.

How little do we think of the dead. Their bones lie entombed in all our towns, villages, and neighborhoods.—The lands they cultivated, the houses they built, the works of their hands, are always before us. We travel the same road, walk the same path, sit at the same fire-sides, sleep in the same room, ride in the same carriage, and dine at the same table; yet seldom remember that those that once occupied those places are now gone—alas! for ever!

Strange that the living should forget the dead, when the world is full of the mementoes of their lives. Strange that the fleeting cares of life should so soon rush in and fill the breast, to the exclusion of those so near. To-day man stands and weeps over the grave of his departed friend; to-morrow, he passes that grave with cold indifference. To-day his heart is wrung with all the bitterness of anguish for the loss of one he so much loved; to-morrow the image of that friend is effaced from his heart and almost forgotten. What a commentary upon man!

THE STAR AND CHILD.

A Maiden walked at eventide
Beside a clear and placid stream,
And smiled as in its depths she saw
A trembling Star's reflected beam.

She smiled until the beam was lost,
As 'cross the sky a cloud was driven,
And then she sighed, and then forgot
The Star was shining still in heaven.

A Mother sat beside Life's stream,
Watching a dying child at dawn,
And smiled, as in its eye she saw
A hope that it might still live on.

She smiled until the eyelids closed,
But watched for breath until the even;
And then she wept, and then forgot
The child was living still in Heaven.