

long Niagara river has been in existence, by the distance worn away. But the artist does not take these practical views, this great power is not of the slightest importance to him, but he gazes awestruck on the magnificent scene presented to him, the immense sheet of water flowing onward with a resistless impetuosity, dashing over the precipice and onward again, seething and boiling, lashing itself into foam against the huge rocks which stand defiantly in the way. These men might all be compared to the cat in the nursery rhyme, as each one sees only what is the most interesting to himself. Of all the objects which were presented to the cat, it singled out the little mouse, following its only guide instinct which bade it seek food to sustain life; so out of all the different ideas which might arise from a view of Niagara, one has the idea only of wealth, another of knowledge or beauty. The artist might have seen more than the mere beauty if he had had a scientific as well as artistic turn of mind, but as he was only interested in the beauty, that was all he perceived.

A great tendency of the human mind is to find fault instead of always seeing the best qualities. If one is asked to criticize a book he at once begins to dissect it, and point out all the flaws and is quite likely to leave some of the best points unmentioned. One who is a great admirer of Pope would judge all other poets by him, and those whose metre and rhyme were not so exquisitely perfect would suffer materially in a criticism by them; though the ideas expressed be as lofty and the diction be as classic, yet were it not cast into so perfect a mould, then the poem would be worth little. A biased critic should not be considered a good judge any more than a poet should be considered a good judge as to the value of a deep theological work. He would not value the clear logical reasoning or the strong arguments; but would think far more of the diction, style, power of description, and so forth.

It is much the same with character. How uncharitable we often are in judging our neighbors! If we have the slightest prejudice against them we are ready to attribute every action to a wrong motive, though there may be many evidences of a pure and noble one; we do not wish to see the many good qualities, so we perceive only the bad ones.

Nothing suffers more from the smallness of man's mind than religion. We cannot see with our limited horizon the breadth and fullness of our Creator's love and mercy. A simple daisy is but a flower to some, but to others it is an eloquent preacher, telling of God's care and love; but if we could only understand what that little blossom was, then could we fully understand our Father's loving care and protection. We can say with the poet,—

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies :—
Hold you here root and all in my hand,
Little flower ; but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

While we are not all pessimists, yet we are continually looking on the dark side of things. We find fault with nature because there are floods and droughts, and refreshing rain does not always fall when we are in need of it. So we look only at the dark rain-clouds, and do not perceive the beautiful silver lining that shows itself around the border. We are interested only in self and our petty griefs, and do not perceive the many gifts for which we should be thankful. We are too much absorbed in the shadows to think of the origin of them, the bright sun, for if there was no glowing orb to give us light, then there would be no shadows, for all would be one dark shade.

You show me a mind moderate, well balanced, neither gay nor sad, neither encouraged nor discouraged—one of those characters which amble onward under a medium load without stumbling or galloping, the head on a level with a bag of oats—and say "This is a wise man!" Wisdom, truth, has a higher flight; it returns to its origin; placidity is not to it the synonym of happiness, any more than mediocrity is that of existence; it wishes to grasp all that God has destined for it, and for this reason it aspires. It has the prodigious flight of the eagle soaring towards the light; it has the faltering of the pinion wearied by distance, and broken by tempest. It has the desires, it has the sorrows of the exile gazing eternally in the direction of this country. I prefer it thus, battered and afflicted, to those short-breathed, short-sighted souls, whose pinions are appalled by space, and whose flight grazes the highway.

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