

written. Let him read, for instance, the first half of "Essays written in the intervals of Business," and if he does not at first appreciate the wisdom and worth of much therein, let him set down his disappointment, not to any dulness of the author's, but to his own ignorance of the world and of mankind : that is, of the very subject-matter which he has vowed to work on, and to improve.

I would ask him, for instance, to consider such a passage as this :—"We are all disposed to dislike, in a manner disproportionate to their demerits, those who offend us by pretensions of any kind. We are apt to fancy that they despise us ; whereas, all the while perhaps, they are only courting our admiration. There are people who wear the worst part of their characters outwards ; they offend our vanity ; they rouse our fears ; and under these influences we omit to consider how often a scornful man is tender-hearted, and an assuming man, one who longs to be popular and to please."

I would ask the young man, too, to read much of "Friends in Council," not merely the essays, but the conversations also. For in them, too, he will chance on many a wise apothegm which will stand him in good stead in his daily work. Especially would I ask him to read that chapter on "Pleasantness ;" and if he be inclined to think it merely a collection of maxims, acute enough, but having no bearing on Theology or on higher Ethics, let him correct his opinion by studying the following passage concerning a certain class of disagreeable people :—

"After much meditation on them, I have come to the conclusion that they are, in general, self-absorbed people. Now to be self-absorbed is a very different thing from being selfish, or of a hard nature. Such persons, therefore, may be very kind, may even be very sensitive ; but the habit of looking at everything from their own point of view, of never travelling out of themselves, prevails even in their kindest and most sympathetic moments ; and so they say and do the most unfeeling things without any ill intention whatsoever. They are much to be pitied as well as blamed ; and the end is that they seldom adopt ways of pleasantness, until they are beaten into them by a long course of varied misfortune, which enables them to look at another's grief and

errors from his own point of view, because it has become their own."

Full of sound doctrine are those words, but like much of Mr. Helps's good advice on this and on other subjects, not likely to be learned by those who need it most, till they have been taught them by sad experience.

And for this reason : that too many of us lack imagination, and have, I suppose, lacked it in all ages. Mr. Helps puts sound words into Midhurst's mouth upon this very matter, in the conversation which follows the essay. It enables, according to him, a man "on all occasions to see what is to be said and thought for others. It corrects harshness of judgment and cruelty of all kinds. I cannot imagine a cruel man imaginative ; and I suspect that there is a certain stupidity closely connected with all prolonged severity of word, or thought, or action."

No doubt : but what if it be said in defence of the stupid and cruel, that imagination is a natural gift ; and that they therefore are not to be blamed for the want of it ? That, again, it would doubtless be very desirable that every public functionary, lay or clerical, should possess a fair share of imagination ; enough at least to put himself in the place of some sutor, whose fate he seals with "a clerk's cold spurt of the pen : " but that imagination is a quality too undefinable and transcendental to be discovered—at least the amount of it—by any examination, competitive or other ?

The answer is, I think, to be found in Mr. Helps's own example. The imagination, like other faculties, grows by food ; and its food cannot be too varied, in order that it may assimilate to itself the greatest number of diverse elements. Whatever natural faculty of imagination Mr. Helps may have had, it has evidently been developed, strengthened, and widened, by most various reading, various experience of men and things. The number and the variety of facts, objective and subjective, touched in his volumes is quite enormous. His mind has plainly been accustomed to place itself in every possible attitude, in order to catch every possible ray of light. The result is, that whenever he looks at a thing, though he may not always—who can, in such a mysterious world ?—see into the heart of it, he at least sees it all round. He has acquired