

The Inglenook.

The Tragedies of Temperament.

BY PRISCILL LEONARD.

Emerson somewhere compares life, with all its experiences, to a string of beads, and temperament to the iron wire on which the beads are strung. Temperament is truly the fundamental fact of our being. To be at all is to be thus, we realize, whether the "thus" means a calm disposition or a nervous one, an eager temper or a sluggish one, a warm nature or a reserved coldness. Character we can mould, intellect we can train—temperament eludes and dominates us, and conditions everything in our lives, plan or resist as we will.

The fight of character against temperament indeed is the central point of the battle of life. The happy man or woman whose temperament makes for lovely character—who is born with a true affinity of soul for all the gifts and graces—can never quite understand this struggle. "His virtues are so hard," said one such gracious natured person of an acquaintance, "they are grim as well as great." "They came hard," said one who knew, "and so they will always carry the marks of the struggle." But hard fought as such virtues are, they never really belong with absolute security of possession, to the soul that has won them. They are made, not born; they require eternal vigilance, lest they slip from us. Habit is second nature, but not nature itself.

We meet this stubborn fact in our friends and relatives, as well as in ourselves. Indeed (being but human), we generally notice it more in them than we do in ourselves. The unconquerable tendency of an impulsive temperament to do unwise things comes home to us painfully when the owner of that temperament sits at our breakfast-table daily or manages our business affairs. A friend with a high temper keeps us forever looking out for danger signals, however much we love him or her; a parent or a child of a melancholy or worrying temperament casts a gloom over our days which no cheerfulness of our own can quite dispel. We are, in a sense, at the mercy of the temperaments around us.

This partly explains the fact that a warm, joyous, eager nature, even when accompanied by a total lack of fine character, always appeals to us and attracts us. The old question, "Can love exist without esteem?" is thus answered in the affirmative, where the negative would be much more virtuous—but quite untrue. "He is no saint—but he is such a sweet sinner!" was the cry of the natural man in the old theologian's heart, as he enjoyed the companionship of a most delightful worldling. Just as beauty draws us, and we must own its charm, whether it belongs to a Madonna or a gypsy, so a fine temperament makes itself felt, whether noble character be behind it or no. We may call it "physical magnetism," if we choose; certainly it is not a moral force, this force of nature's capricious making.

Nearly all earth's tragedies lie in temperament. Put a resolute nature in Hamlet's place, and where is the anguish of the situation?—clean gone, vanished into thin air along with the melancholy Dane. Put a calm, judicial temperament in Othello's

place, and Iago is powerless to make his fatal mischief. "If I were you," would solve most problems when advice is needed. The trouble is that I never can be you, and so advice has become the proverbial drug in the market that it deserves to be. Our own temptation, our own difficult situation, seen no matter how clearly, by an adviser of different temperament, becomes so different that his counsel is not to the point, as we feel at once.

It is probably because we unconsciously realize all this, without thinking it out at all, that we seldom make a steady and successful fight against our own natures. We find it easier to bend and shape character—which is flexible and plastic—to temperament, than to spend years of effort in subduing our stubborn temperaments to the higher will of our souls. We cover up the iron wire with beads, and devote ourselves to making the beads as beautiful as possible. The wire will show every now and then, but we try to ignore it, and so do our friends. Life is a series of compromises, anyhow, and this particular compromise is no more than the rest.

Sometimes, however, we can not ignore our temperament. It is generally in middle life that it asserts itself thus. Youth is the time of hope, of effort, of full energies, when what we are trying to do overrules, more or less, what we are. It is later on, when the hope flags, and the effort must be sustained on exhausted energies, that the underlying temperament proclaims itself. There are sudden breakdowns of character in middle life that nobody understands except the man himself. But he knows well—and knows himself mastered because he has failed to control when he had the chance.

One of the saddest tragedies of temperament is where two irreconcilable natures are perforce chained together. "Bear and forbear" is an excellent motto; but all the bearing and forbearing in the world will not smooth out a situation like this. Sometimes it is parent and child, sometimes wife and husband; sometimes brother and sister who find themselves in this position. They may even esteem each other, but their ways are naturally and constantly irritating. And when a person's daily ways irritate us, the virtues of angels are not common. The old inscription upon the tomb of a married couple, "Their warfare is accomplished," gives hope for a future life; but in the present one, the only remedy in such cases is "to suffer and be strong."

The artistic temperament, as any observer knows, is usually a tragic one either for the possessor or for somebody else. Still, fortunately for humanity, the greatest artists,—Shakespeare and Raphael—appear to have made all around them happy and to have been "enchantly beloved." Perhaps if Carlyle had been greater, the house in Cheyne Row would have been the abode of harmony, not discord. Yet one cannot but feel that the most tragic temperament of all is the thoroughly commonplace one. The nature that can not either suffer or enjoy greatly—the stolid, narrow, material temperament that has not a spark anywhere in the clod—this is more hopeless in its certain loss than any other in its possible pain. It

degrades life to a mere existence. Better a battle-ground than a blank. Whatever trials an uncomfortable temperament holds for its possessor, it also holds the excitement of war and possibility of victory; and through all tragedies, he must be happy in the end who, like Browning's hero, has

"Never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted,
Wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better
Sleep to wake."

Rags and Tags and Velvet Gowns.

BY MARY MARSHALL PARKS.

"N there was a new boy at school yesterday, 'n he had great patches on his knees; 'n when we choosed up the boys didn't choose him; 'n his face got read, oh! as red as fire; 'n he walked away 'n stood lookin' off over the water at the ships. Served him right, I say."

Ted had been rattling on in this fashion for at least fifteen minutes; and mama, who was reading up for her next club paper, hardly heard a word; but this last caught her attention, and she looked over the top of the book with a little start.

"Perhaps he was watching for his ship to come in," said she quietly.

If Ted could have seen the rest of her face, he would have done some thinking before he said any more.

"His ship! 'Tisn't likely a boy like him would have a ship,—is it now? Course he can't help the patches, p'raps," said Ted, condescendingly, "but he oughtn't to come to a pay school with us. Harold Winston said it wasn't—suitable; and so did all the other boys. He ought to go to the public school where the other patches are."

Mama's eyebrows went up in a fashion that would have alarmed Ted if he had happened to look at her, but he was stroking the spotless knees of his own velvet trousers.

"I used to know a boy who wore patches."

"You, mama?" cried Ted.

"Yes. I used to play with him every day. Patches and bare brown feet, and a hat without any brim."

"Was he a nice boy?" asked Ted, doubtfully.

"I think, taking everything into consideration, he was the nicest boy I ever knew," said mama, with an emphatic little nod. "And I ought to know, for I went to school with him for years."

"N when the boys choosed up did they leave him out?" asked Ted.

"Oh, dear me, no!" said mama, decidedly. "They wouldn't for the world have done anything so impolite."

Ted looked blank for a moment. Then his face grew red, oh! as red as fire.

"His ship hadn't come in then," continued mama; "but it has since. He owns a big factory now."

"W-what's his name?" sputtered Ted.

"John Hartley Livingston."

"Uncle John Livin'ston!"

Mama nodded. "All boys who wear patches—and bare brown feet—don't become rich men; but I fear they are more apt to become something worth while than boys who wear velvet suits, because they are used to hardships and dirt, and disagreeable things. Men who amount to something have a great deal of hard, disagreeable work to do."

"This is my best suit, anyway," cried Ted, twisting in his chair. "I don't always wear velvet. You know I wore it 'cause it was Friday and speakin' day."