

SLAVERY FROM WITHIN.

Let a word be said on the other kind of slavery; that which comes from a cause internal to ourselves. This is common at the North, and South, and East, and West. In this case the man is prevented from doing what is best for him, not by some other man who has bound him, but by some passion or prejudice, superstition or sin. Here the mischief is in his own heart. If you look around you, you find many that bear the mark of the beast; branded on the forehead and the right hand; branded as slaves. "He that committeth sin is the slave of sin."—The avaricious man is a slave. He cannot think a thought but as his master bids. He cannot see a truth, if a dollar intervene. He cannot relieve the poor, nor sympathize with the distressed, nor yield to the humane impulse of his natural heart. If he sees in the newspaper a sentence on the wastefulness or the idleness of the poor, he remembers it forever; but a word in the Bible to encourage charity,—he never finds that.

The passionate man is a slave; he lies at the mercy of the accidents of a day. If his affairs go well, he is calm and peaceful; but if some little mistake arise, he is filled with confusion, and the demon that rules him draws the chain. This master has many a slave under his yoke. He is more cruel than any planter in Cuba or Trinidad. He not only separates friend from friend, parent from child, and husband from wife, but what is worse yet, prevents their loving one another while they are together. This makes man a tyrant, not a husband; woman a fiend, not an angel, as God made her to be. This renders marriage a necessary evil, and housekeeping a perpetual curse, for it takes the little trifles which happen everywhere, except between angels, and makes them very great matters; it converts mistakes into faults; accidents into vices; errors into crimes; and so rends assunder the peace of families, and in a single twelvemonth disturbs more marriages than all the slaveholders of Carolina in a century.

So the peevish man is a slave. His ill humor watches him like a demon. Oft-times it casteth him into the fire, and often into the water. In the morning he complains that his caprice is not complied with; in the evening that it is. He is never peaceful, except when angry; never quiet, but in a storm. He is free to do nothing good; so he acts badly, thinks badly, feels badly,—three attributes of a Devil. A yoke of iron and fetters of brass were grievous to bear, no doubt; the whip of a task-master makes wounds in the flesh; but God save us from the tyranny of the peevish, both what they inflict and what they suffer.

The intemperate man also is a slave; one most totally subjugated. His vice exposes him to the contempt and insult of base men, as well as to the pity of the good. Not only this, but his master strips him of his understanding; takes away his common sense, conscience, his Reason, Religion,—qualities that make a man differ from a beast; on his garments, his face, his wife, and child, is written in great staring letters, so that he may read that runs—*This man also has sold his birth-right and become a slave.* The jealous planter forbids his slave to learn; but he cannot take from him the understanding he has got. This refinement of torture it was left for Intemperance to exercise, levelling at once the distinctions between rude and polished.—*Theodore Parker.*

RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE.

I know that there are men of general integrity and worth, who, with a sort of amiable ease or indolence of spirit, say, that "they are well enough as they are." I think, too, that I understand the meaning of this language, and I distinctly see, as I apprehend, that it does not go to the depth—no, nor any where near to the depth, of their nature and their wants. They are "well enough," in a worldly sort—well enough, because they are comfortable, and prosperous. But will all this meet the great, the general, and the urgent want of the human heart?—Does the heart never ask any thing that riches cannot give? Does it never sigh for a peace that the world cannot give? I know not what the worldly heart may answer; but this I know, that some of the most bitter complainers, that ever poured out the language of satire and scorn and disgust upon this world, are precisely the most worldly beings in it. No, the world does not satisfy the worldly; and they know it. How is it possible that it should do so, if the mind of a worldly man be still a mind;—if there be any thing in him that can be called a mind! Why, even the senses range far beyond this world. Fix thine eye upon a star, in the infinite distance and depth of heaven.—

What beam is that which visiteth thee from afar! If I were to pause now for the brief space of only eight minutes, a ray from the sun would, in that brief interval, have traversed almost an hundred millions of miles, to reach us! What beam, then, is that which visiteth thee from far, far beyond the precincts of solar day? Through the slow revolutions of years—I speak the astronomical fact;—for aught thou knowest, before thou wast created—I speak the astronomical doubt;—for aught thou knowest, before the world was created, that ray of light left its native seats, and through distances awful, and inconceivable, through the silent lapse and the slow revolution of years unknown, that ray of light has been travelling onward, and onward, till it has fallen on thy poor weak sense. Now follow it back, on the line of its immeasurable progress, to its original sphere, its home which it hath left to teach thee—and does thy mind stop there? No: nor there, nor anywhere does it stop, but beyond and beyond, to infinity, to eternity, it wanders. And can that mind say, that it is "well enough" in a little earthly comfort and a few worldly possessions? Can the soul, that spans the universe, and measures eges, be content with a grain of sand upon this shore of time? No. Hold thou the measureless ocean in the hollow of thy hand; and then, mayest thou curb the swellings of thought, passion, and desire, to that narrow compass. Garner up the treasures of infinite worlds in thy coffer; and then mayest thou look up in that coffer, the affections that are expanding to the grasp of infinity. No, mistaken soul! thine eye spans the arch of heaven—thy soaring thought riseth to the eternal stars; thine aim must be broad and boundless as those pathways of heaven. As surely as thou livest, thou must live righteously, virtuously, wisely. Life is an argument for piety. Sense is a guide to faith. Time should bear our thoughts, as it is bearing our souls, to eternity!

But there are other witnesses to be summoned in this argument, besides events, and their unavoidable impression. There are distinct wants in the mind. Amidst the cares and conflicts of this life, there are certain ultimate objects, in which all men are interested. One of these objects is happiness. I say, then—I may say to every man, however irreligious—thou wouldst be happy.

Thou wouldst be happy. When thou art happiest,—still something is wanting—and thou wouldst be happier. When thy thought is brightest, a shade like the shadow of a cloud upon the fairest landscape, cometh over thee, and thou wouldst, thy thought were brighter. When thy possessions are most abundant, there is yet a want in thy mind; and thou wouldst have a more satisfying fullness within. Is there any thing but what is all-perfect, and infinite, and immortal, that can satisfy thee? But the all-perfect and the infinite, and the immortal, belong to the province of religion; and if thou wouldst find them, thou must find them, in her glorious sphere.

But again I say; thou wouldst be happy. Thou wouldst be happy—ah, thou wouldst, indeed, be so, when thou art not happy; for what is so intolerable as misery? Thou wouldst be happy when thou art sick; when thou art sorrowful; when thou art bereaved. When thou art cast down, and almost crushed by some of the thousand, nameless, burdens of life, thou wouldst be happy. And dost thou know, canst thou conceive of any thing, that can make thee happy in these circumstances, but religion?

But again, in regard to this matter of happiness, I may say to every one,—something troubles you, at one time or another,—something is the matter with you. What is it?—What aileth thee, O never satisfied man!—What is it? What is it, that takes from the joy of life, when at the fullest; or disturbs the clear and overflowing fountain, or imbibers its waters? What is it? You tell me of events, of annoyances, of a troublesome world, of the vexations of life. Do you not know, that life and the world, are the reflection of yourself—the image without, of the reality within? What is it, then? Ah! it is evermore, some unholy passion—pride or envy, or sensual excess, or the workings of a selfish, ungenerous, ungrateful mind. A calm and self-governed temper, a benevolent gladness of spirit, the cheerfulness of a good conscience, the gentle affections of piety, would make every fountain of earthly good, a fountain of real peace and happiness. Does any man deny this? Does the most confirmed sceptic, or the boldest scorner, deny it? Religion, then, above all other things is commended to the desire of happiness.—It comes near, it is adjunct, to that great desire. It belongs to it;—as light to the eye that would see; as food to the hunger that would be satisfied. Deep, then, impatient, unquenched as that desire is, strongly, unceasingly, eternally as it beats, like the pulse

of existence, in the human heart, so deeply, so strongly, so unceasingly, should the human heart be interested about that which alone can give it happiness: interested not merely as in something future and far off, but as in something of present, pressing, instant concern. If the heart knew its own welfare it would be so interested. And the very soul of youth would not burn with a love of unholy pleasure, so intense, but it would be quenched in the holy tears of that supplication, "Oh! satisfy me early with thy mercy, that I may be glad and rejoice in thee all my days."

Once more and with regard to the wants of the mind, and the ultimate objects of life: if you are a reasonable being, you would improve. If you were a brute, you might neither know nor care anything for this.—But if you are a reasonable being you must desire to improve. You cannot stop at the point you have now reached, and be satisfied. You would, you must go onward; and you never will come to the point—it is not in your nature ever to come to the point—from which you would not go onward! A thousand ages of improvement would find you still asking to go forward. Can you then be indifferent to the religion whose sphere is eternity!—*Deucy.*

THE USES OF AFFLICTION.

There is, perhaps, no doctrine of the New Testament that must strike the ear of a heathen more strangely, than that the Infinite Father, though a being whose very essence is love, yet chasteneth those whom he most loveth, and scourgeth every soul that he receiveth. Even in the Christian Church this doctrine is little understood, or indeed received, if we may judge from the remarks continually made by otherwise intelligent persons, concerning the various dispensations of joy or sorrow which are continually going on around them. True, there are every where many souls who have been brought to feel its vital meaning, but as a doctrine of the Christian Church, it seems to be still but imperfectly received or understood, even in this nineteenth century of its promulgation. No stronger proof of the truth of this assertion is needed, than is offered by the common fact, that when sorrow or misfortune falls on those whom the world admits to be virtuous, or when the notoriously wicked pass their lives amid a continual succession of prosperity, we hear surprise expressed that an overruling Providence should allow such things to be. It would seem to be overlooked, that worldly honor, the insidious corrupter of virtue, is no fitting reward for piety, nor was ever held out as such by our Lord, to his followers; while equal blindness is shown to the truth that worldly honor is the appropriate and naturally to be expected reward of worldliness. It is but fair and just, humanly speaking, that he who sells his soul for gold, should receive his price, and that he who sacrifices honor and integrity to gain office and high station, should receive that for which he strives. To him who labors only for what this world can give, the good things of this world should not be grudged; while he who toils for the blessings of heaven should be content to wait for his reward until the hour comes when he shall be received into heavenly mansions.

When sorrow and disappointment fall to the lot of the evil, the cry is often raised, *Lo!* a judgment from heaven, and something of satisfaction is expressed. On such occasions let him who is without sin raise the first cry of joy. Let us consider what is the nature of a judgment.

God is love; therefore his judgments must be filled with tenderness towards his children, for they must bear the impress of his nature. Whether painful or joyous, they are full of benignant purposes for the health of the soul; even as the raging tempest, no less than the bland sunshine, is the beneficent and needful instrument whereby the insalubrious atmosphere is purified.

If we truly receive into our hearts the doctrine that the judgments of heaven are tender manifestations of parental love, the voice of triumph can never be raised when the wicked suffer. A gentle compassion would rather be awakened in our hearts, and we should look upon them in hope, earnestly desiring to do for them every thing in our power in order to encourage and promote the legitimate effect of the dispensation.

When affliction fall upon the pious, though it may seem dark and unintelligible to those who behold it, yet in most instances, the individual if he humbly looks into his own heart, can perceive its application; for every one who cares to read his own heart, knows in some degree, or may know if he will, his own sins, his own wants. Where, however, even the sufferer finds his trials unintelligible; when first they come upon him, if he but waits in humble faith, he will, even by

the work that they shall do in his own soul, so grow in wisdom that he will presently learn to comprehend their design. He may not recognize the seed when it is first sown, yet if he tend it in faith, God will water it, and the blade will appear, bearing in due time fruit, an hundred fold.

The acute suffering to which little children are often subjected previous to the development of any of their reasoning powers, is sufficient proof that the comprehension of grief is not necessary in order that it may work its purpose on the character. For surely we cannot doubt that infantile suffering has an end to be wrought upon the tender germ of life, however little we may be able to understand that end.

The providences of God are often like sweet music playing in the midst of a noisy crowd, whose clamor quite drowns its harmonies from the ear of him who stands near by. If, however, the listener will place himself far away, beyond the reach of the sounds of uproar, he will then hear with distinctness the tones of the music, which by their melodious qualities possess the power of penetrating the atmosphere to a distance far greater than the unmodulated clangor can reach. The thonging cares and passions of this life, will in the same manner, sometimes prevent the soul from perceiving the beautiful fitness and exquisite harmony of those dispensations of heaven, that crush the hopes and destroy the plans, which have perhaps been cherished inmates of the heart for years. But if the sufferer will go far away from those hopes and plans; that is, if he will rise above worldly considerations, and contemplate events in their eternal relations, he will perceive and feel the harmony and beauty in the ways of Providence, and know that the discordance was either in his own heart, or in the world around him.

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RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION.

A few sentences will be indulged to me here respecting Religious Conversation. I believe both that the proposition is true, and that it is expedient to set it down,—that religious conversation is one of the banes of the religious world. There are many who are really attached to religion, and who sometimes feel its power, but who allow their better feelings to evaporate in an ebullition of words. They forget how much religion is an affair of the mind and how little of the tongue: they forget how possible it is to live under its power without talking of it to their friends; and some, it is to be feared, may forget how possible it is to talk without feeling its influence. Not that the good man's piety is to live in his breast like an anchorite in his cell. The evil does not consist in speaking of religion, but in speaking too much; not in manifesting our allegiance to God; not in encouraging by exhortation, and amending by our advice; not in placing the light upon a candlestick—but in making religion a common topic of discourse. Of all species of well intended religious conversation, that perhaps is the most exceptionable which consists in narrating our own religious feelings. Many thus intrude upon that religious quietude which is peculiarly favorable to the Christian character. The habit of communicating "experiences" I believe to be very prejudicial to the mind. It may sometimes be right to do this: in the great majority of instances I believe it is not beneficial, and not right. Men thus dissipate religious impressions, and therefore diminish their effects. Such observation as I have been enabled to make, has sufficed to convince me that, where the religious character is solid, there is but little religious talk; and that, where there is much talk, the religious character is superficial, and, like other superficial things, is easily destroyed. And if these be the attendants, and in part the consequences of general religious conversation, how peculiarly dangerous must that conversation be, which exposes those impressions that perhaps were designed exclusively for ourselves, and the use of which may be frustrated by communicating them to others.—Our solicitude should be directed to the invigoration of the religious character in our own minds; and we should be anxious that the plant of piety, if it had fewer branches might have a deeper root.—*Jonathan Dymond.*

VIRTUE.—The everlasting hills will crumble to dust, but the influence of a good act will never die. The earth will grow old and perish, but virtue in the heart will be ever green, and will flourish throughout eternity. The moon and stars will grow dim, and the sun roll from the heavens; but true and undefiled religion will grow brighter and brighter, and not cease to exist while God himself shall live.