

## The Radius of Life.

BY S. C. MITCHELL.

We are accustomed to rate men according to their intellectual acumen or according to their strength of will; but shall we not find in the reach of their sympathies a truer measure of men's greatness? We value woman for what she is; we value man for what he does. I fancy that the rationale of the judgment concerning woman—namely, being—is by far the more correct method of fixing human values. That was the secret which the life of the late Dr. William D. Thomas taught me. He put being far above doing, and hence that gentle courtesy and lofty spirituality which ever characterized him; those genuine fruits of the spirit—love, kindness, and self-control. "To be spirituality minded is life." Now, in gauging a man according to his sympathies, aside from any work (in the physicist's sense of the word) which his life yields, we are laying stress upon being as the essential thing in character and achievement. Sympathy which wells from such a rich and mellowed heart and which bespeaks confidence in men, however low they may have fallen, excels in real helpfulness all bustling activities. It was this power in Jesus that raised up Zaccheus from moral death as truly as his divine word had called Lazarus from the grave. Men suffer from the feeling of mean-spiritedness, said Aristotle. Hence their craving for consideration and encouragement. We are apt to be wholly external to one another. "Charity" is so easy, and sympathy so hard. Sympathy is indeed costly. Every pastor, every physician, every teacher, every mother knows what Jesus experienced when, at the touch of the hem of his garment, he perceived that virtue had gone forth from him.

### MANY SYMPATHIES, MANY SENSES.

File upon a man's having only five senses. At how many points do you touch life? Just so many senses have you. That was a beautiful figure of Sir William Hamilton's, in which he likened the universe to a prism of a thousand sides. Here we know five; heaven, perhaps, means that we shall be so endowed as to know them all. But is it, after all, necessary to postpone this enlargement of our powers to so distant an existence? Is it not possible to multiply our faculties even in this world so as to embrace a wider circle of diverse objects, interests and men? As the ascent of the vine is surer in proportion to the tendrils which it throws out to clasp the oak, so is man stronger in proportion to the number of feelers which he sends forth to take hold upon life. "The most commonplace service," writes James Seth, "the cup of cold water, any deed done for another, takes us quite out of ourselves, idealizes our life, breaks down its limitations; for a true ministry to any human need implies a perfect sympathy and identification of ourselves with the needy one, and we know the enlargement of the spirit's life that comes from such a sympathy. It opens up other worlds of experience—the world of poverty, of sickness, of sorrow, of temptation, of sin; it unlocks the secret chambers of the human heart."

### SYMPATHY IS ALLIED TO STRENGTH.

Let us not suppose that sympathy is inconsistent with strength. The light that shines farthest also shines brightest. Paul is a classic example of intensity of purpose: "This one thing I do." Yet mark the range of his sympathies: "I am become all things to all men." One has said that, instead of sympathy with men, some have a sympathy—so to speak—exclusively with God; others only with ideas, a system of truth. Paul mothered all. Leibnitz, the codiscoverer with Newton of the calculus, was as versatile as he was potential in the interests—literary, scientific, philosophic, and political—to which during his eager life he gave himself. Some one, alluding to the multifarious activities of Lord Broughman, said: "Science is his forte." "Yes; and omniscience is his foible," replied the reverend wit, Sydney Smith. In spite of that caustic criticism—deserved, no doubt, in part—many a gifted man might well covet the power which Broughman displayed in a half-dozen different fields of progress. One of the three founders—Jeffrey and Sydney Smith were the others—of the "Edinburgh Review," the prototype of all such periodicals, he was a Parliamentary orator of no mean repute and a gallant friend of freedom the world over.

### GLADSTONE VS. BISMARCK.

Mr. Gladstone, as the financier of the British Empire, was without a peer; yet how ramified were his sympathies! He was a denizen of Homer's world, the appreciative translator of Horace, a strenuous defender of Christian truth, the admiring interpreter of the American Constitution, a leader of reform and liberal thought, and the greater wonder because he started out as a conservative and was educated at staid Oxford, "whither German theories make their way when they are about to die." On a pleasure jaunt to Naples, he was moved to righteous indignation by King Bomba's iniquitous rule, which he lashed with that scorpion phrase, "the negation of God erected into a system of government." The Ionian Isles, torn like the lost Pleiad from the bosom of its sisters, he restored to Hellas. In behalf of the massacred Armenians and against the policy-cowed governments of Christendom, he raised his voice; and the present Sul-

tan, though he may live long, will ever bear Mr. Gladstone's brand as "the great assassin." His last political hour was spent in a courageous effort to right the centuries of England's misrule in Ireland. Every generous movement found a response in his many-chambered heart. No better commentary on the many-sidedness of Gladstone's nature can be found than such as Bismarck, the self-centred giant, furnishes. Bismarck has his counterpart in Germany's Constitution, which is little more than the lengthened shadow of the Iron Chancellor, not at all to be understood aside from his impelling personality. Yet, in the powers aggregated, he overreached himself, was humbled by a cocksure youth, and spent his later years in a retirement almost as tragic as St. Helena. By wresting Alsace and Lorraine, he drew upon his fatherland the passions of France, like avenging furies. It is to-day problematic just what lease of life is to be granted to the flushed empire which we welded together. All his towering work was supported by a single column, self. Granite though that was, it is already discovered to be too frail. The present industrial depression of Germany is possibly symptomatic of deeper causes.

### SYMPATHY BRINGS INSIGHT.

Besides giving strength, sympathy purges the soul of the dross of our nature. As perfect love casts out fear, so lively sympathy abates recrudescing passion. Callous cruelty, such as the Romans displayed, disappears before a quickened imagination. Lecky attributes the chief cause of sectarian animosity to the incapacity of most men to conceive hostile systems in the light in which they appear to their adherents, and to enter into the enthusiasm which they inspire. "The severity of our judgment of criminals," he adds, "is also usually excessive, because the imagination finds it more easy to render an action than a state of mind."

This subtle remark of Lecky, himself a historian, lays bare the first requisite in all who aspire to be historians. For the pursuit of history is less a matter of study (i. e., the conning of naked facts and dates) than a sympathetic state of mind. It requires the metamorphosis of one's personality. The intellect can tag the doings of men, but only the soul can enter interpretatively into the secret of their zigzag sequence. A cold-blooded mortal, however brilliant a rhetorician he may be, cannot construe history, because he is estopped by his immobile temperament from transmuting himself into a Cæsar Borgia or a St. Francis of Assisi. A past age can be seen only through eyes that viewed it. Only for a mind thus magnetized by the truth—to change the figure—do the facts of an era, like iron filings, assume orderly positions. If your spiritual affinities reach to the circumference of human experience, you can comprehend those distant worlds, just as the sun by attractive power lays hold of Neptune and guides it in the encircling course. For the pursuit of history, therefore, there is needed a preparation of the heart, a charity and catholicity of spirit, hardly discoverable elsewhere. As Lady Macbeth prayed to be unsexed, so the scientist must depersonalize his mind, letting it reflect as a mirror the lineaments of nature. But this is only half of the difficulty of the historian, who must not only rid himself of blurring prejudices, but must be ready at will to make himself into another being—one living perhaps, in some remote clime amid strange circumstances. The scientist eliminates the personal equation, the historian substitutes the personal equation. What has been said of history applies with equal force to the critic. Sympathy is his divining rod. In St. Beuve's charming book, "Monday Chats," you marvel at his luminous judgments, his out-of-the-way guesses at truth, until you discover the phantom existence of that consummate critic. He is a sprite that inhabits all eras. Shakespeare had incarnated Hamlet long before that mystic Dane was seen on the stage of the Globe Theatre.

The distinctive greatness of our age lies in the wealth of its sympathies. Trans-oceanic messages, whether with or without a wire, are tokens of world-responsiveness in this day. The peoples of the earth are huddling together like sheep—not through fear, but rather in sheer joy at the discovery that we all belong to one flock. The Hebrew, the Greek, the Roman, each creative according to his own impulse, has had his day; at last the Teuton, the common carrier, the missionary, has come to his own and enjoys an unchallenged primacy. A new luminary has shot rays of sympathy into the darkest recesses of nature, into the remotest ages of the past, and into the most barbaric nations of the earth.—Religious Herald.

### Crumbling Characters.

Our growth is by littles, and so is our decay. We are not overcome in one great effort, but in a constant endeavor, lasting through the years of life. We are not often overthrown by a sudden wind of trial, unless we have weakened our souls by yielding to the power of evil in a thousand small temptations. When a storm-wind sweeps over the forest, it is the weakened trees that fall. Character grows or crumbles; and God helps the growth as he permits the decline.

Every age, every faithful church, every careless disciple needs a Nathan to point out sin and say, "Thou art the man." Community of life and social service, which the Christian thought of the time exalts, can never be allowed to obscure the need of individual growth in holiness. The ancients built with clay for mortar, moistening and kneading it until it was of an even consistency. But the prophet denounces those who build with dry clay (untempered mortar), which crumbles from beneath the stones, leaving them ready to fall at the first unusual strain.

It is by neglects, and often small neglects, that the crumbling of character usually begins. "Omissions opened the way for commissions." The ordinary duties of study, prayer and worship are not mere arbitrary requirements; they are practice ground for the attainment of strength. Mere neglect of thought hinders many a man's growth and helpfulness. He is kind at heart, but seldom thinks to bring his kindness to the front and watch for opportunities of putting it in exercise. He believes in the power of prayer, but his petitions are perfunctory, mere creatures of an old routine of habit. He neglects to give charity, reverence faith, a foremost place in his mental activities, and the unnoticed deterioration of his character shows at last that they have no real place at all. The sap of vital strength has run down out of the branches, and the first strong wind shows the weakness of the tree.

It is a sad but hopeful awakening when the crumbling of character through sins of neglect and sins of evil choice is recognized. For truth is best, even though it breaks our pride and drives us from our heights of self-satisfaction to take the lowest place. The dry clay must be picked from the wall, the crumbled blocks thrown down, and we must build again from the one foundation. Then the words of the Psalm are sweet: "He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Let the thought of God be brought to the front, and kept there in all the duties and enjoyments of life. Let the motive for service be the constraining love of Christ. Let self, so far as possible, be forgotten in the thought of God's fatherhood and the brotherhood of man, and character will build itself again in Christ-like strength. The vision of a passive holiness belongs to far-off ages and unchristian faiths. Christ's disciples attain to power and symmetry of character in action.—Congregationalist.

### Winter Early.

Blessed snow thou art come to take in thine arms  
The worn and trampled earth;  
To hide her away from the iron clad hoof  
Of the creature that knows not her worth.

Thou art come to cover her rugged form—  
By the winds and the frost laid bare—  
As a garment of pure and spotless white  
Which none but the worthy may wear.

Men called her beautiful months ago,  
And accepted her numerous gifts.  
But now they are glad that her careworn face  
Is hidden away in thy drifts.

Oh winter! thou lover of other years,  
Thou art come to be wedded to earth,  
And to deck her in sparkling ancestral gems  
Because of her royal birth.

For was not her creator the King of Kings?  
And did he not let thee know  
That thou shouldst wed her, ah winter bold—  
And wreath her in beautiful snow?

Then we will sing merrily gay wedding bells,  
As we dash away in our sleighs.  
For men are sure to take all they can  
Out of the first wintry days.

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### Winter Late.

The earth still enshrouded in eider-down  
Lies tranquilly taking her rest,  
So weary is she with the travail of months  
In which she has brought forth her best.

In her deep and unbroken sleep,  
She hears not the woodsman's axe  
As he wakens an echo and strikes down her pride  
To defray her annual tax.

And she heeds not the miner's probe  
As deeply her bosom he wounds  
In his burglarous effort to pilfer the wealth  
Of her coffers and ancient tombs.

Tho' the subterranean forces at times  
With indignation protest  
And with an artillery ever at hand  
The invaders progress arrests.

And a tremor runs through her form  
And sometimes her bosom may heave  
Still she slumbers unconscious of friend or foe  
And of contest she does not conceive.

Thus she lies in a dreamless repose  
By Winter Late's dominant will,  
Till she wakens in spring at the call of the birds  
And the ripple of many a rill.

Take heed to the Earth, oh man!  
Whose seasons decree she must rest,  
And deprive not thy health of its greatest need  
Because with thy liberty blessed.

Marysville, N. B.

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