Joseph Droz
The Art of Being Happy

BY TIMOTHY FLINT.

‘ — sua si bonna norint.’
Virgil.

ADVERTISEMENT

The text, upon which the following observations and comments are based, does not assume to be a literal translation of the celebrated work of Droz. The original is strongly idiomatic; and the author has carried an uncommon talent of being laconic sometimes to the point of obscurity. I have often found it impossible to convey to the English reader a sentiment, perfectly obvious in the original, in as few words as are there used. The French, in its more numerous articles, more allowable and bold personifications, and arbitrary use of gender, has, in the hand of certain writers, this advantage over our language. When the doctrines of the book are compared one with the other, and each with the general bearing of the work, the inculcation, namely, of the truth that *virtue is happiness*, there will be found nothing immoral or reprehensible in it. The author, on the whole, leans to the Epicurean

philosophy. Unfavorable, though erroneous impressions have been very generally entertained of that philosophy. In deference to that opinion, I have altogether omitted the few sentences, which seemed appropriate to some of the dogmas of the Epicureans. Nothing can be more remote from their alleged impiety, than the general tenor of this work. One of its most eloquent and impressive chapters is that upon religion. There is a distinct class in France, both numerous and important, the *literatures*. Many of the remarks of the author, bearing chiefly upon that class, seemed inapplicable, or unintelligible in our country, where there is no such class to address. I have passed over many passages and parts of chapters, which had an almost exclusive reference to persons in that walk in life. I have added members of sentences, and even whole sentences to the text, where such additions seemed necessary to develope the doctrine to an English reader.

In a word, I do not offer the text, as an exact translation, but as the only treatise within the compass of my reading, which has discussed the pursuit of happiness, as a science or an art; and as one which has advanced more eloquent and impressive sentiments upon the subject, than I have elsewhere met. With the slight alterations, which I have made, I have found this book to meet my own thoughts; and I have laid out of the text all phrases and passages, which spoke

otherwise. I have availed myself of the words of another, because they have expressed my own views better than I could have hoped to express them myself. This explanation will be my reply to all remarks, touching mistranslation, or liberties taken with the author.

Letter I

The following thoughts, my dear children, are those of an affectionate father going out of life, to those he most loves, who are coming forward in it. I am perfectly aware, that nothing but time can impart all the dear bought instruction of experience. Upon innumerable questions, that relate to life, you will receive efficient teaching only by reaping the fruit of your own errors. But one who has preceded you on the journey, who has listened to the impressive oracles of years, may impart some aid if you will listen with docility, to enable you to anticipate the lessons of experimental acquaintance with the world. In what I am about to write, I trust I may bring you this aid. As you embark on the uncertain voyage, I cannot but hope, that your filial piety will incline you to a frequent recurrence to the parental chart. You are aware, that circumstances have brought me into contact with all conditions, and into a view of all the aspects of life. I ought, therefore, to be qualified to impart useful lessons

upon the evils and dangers of inexperience. You, at least, will not see assumption in such lessons, when they result from the remembrance of my own errors. You may consider what follows, whether it be my own remarks, or what I have adopted from others, as the gleanings of experimental instruction, from what I have myself seen, felt, suffered, or enjoyed; and as my comments upon the influence, which my election of alternatives has had, upon the amount of my own enjoyment or suffering.

You will find enough who are ready to inspire you with indifference or disdain for such counsels. They will indolently, and yet confidently, assure you, that the theoretical discussion of the pursuit of happiness is, of all visionary investigations, the most profitless and inapplicable; that lecture, write, preach as we may, the future will be, perhaps ought to be, as the past; that the world is always growing older, without ever growing wiser; and that men are evidently no more successful in their search after happiness now, than in the remotest periods of recorded history. They will affirm that man has always been the sport of accident, the slave of his passions, the creature of circumstances; that it is useless to reason, vain to consult rules, imbecile to surrender independence, to follow the guidance of those who assume to be wise, or receive instruction from those who have been taught by years. They will allege the utter inefficacy of the lights of

reason, philosophy, and religion, judging from the little illumination, which they have hitherto shed upon the paths of life. On the same ground, and from the same reasonings, they might declaim against every attempt, in every form to render the world wiser and happier. With equal propriety they might say, ‘close the pulpit, silence the press, cease from parental discipline, moral suasion, and the training of education. Do what you will, the world will go on as before.’ Who does not see the absurdity of such language? Because we cannot do everything, shall we do nothing? Because the million float towards the invisible future without any pole star, or guided only by the presumption of general opinion, is it proof conclusive that none have been rendered happier in consequence of having followed wiser guidance, and pursued happiness by system?

Such is the practical creed of the great mass, with whom you will be associated in life. I, on the contrary, think entirely with the French philosopher, whose precepts you are about to read, that this general persuasion is palpably false and fatal; that much suffering may be avoided, and much enjoyment obtained by following rules, and pursuing happiness by system; that I have had the fortune to meet with numbers, who were visible proofs that men may learn how to be happy. I am confident that the far greater portion of human suffering is of our own procuring, the result of ignorance and mistaken views, and that it is a

superfluous and unnecessary mixture of bitterness in the cup of human life. I firmly believe that the greater number of deaths, instead of being the result of specific diseases, to which they are attributed, are really caused by a series of imperceptible malign influences, springing from corroding cares, griefs, and disappointments. To say, that more than half of the human race die of sorrow, and a broken heart, or in some way fall victims to their passions, may seem like advancing a revolting doctrine; but it is, nevertheless, in my mind, a simple truth.

We do not *see* the operations of grief upon some one or all the countless frail and delicate constituents of human life. But if physiology could look through the infinitely complicated web of our structure with the power of the solar microscope, it would behold every chagrin searing some nerve, paralyzing the action of some organ, or closing some capillary; and that every sigh draws its drop of life blood from the heart. Nature is slow in resenting her injuries; but the memory of them is indelibly impressed, and treasured up for a late, but certain revenge. Nervousness, lowness of spirits, headache, and all the countless train of morbid and deranged corporeal and mental action, are, at once, the cause and the effect of sorrow and anxiety, increased by a constant series of action and reaction. Thought and care become impressed upon the brow. The bland essence of cheerfulness evaporates. The head becomes

shorn of its locks; and the frosts of winter gather on the temples. These concurrent influences silently sap the stamina of life; until, aided by some adventitious circumstance, which we call cold, fever, epidemic, dyspepsia — death lays his hand upon the frame that by the sorrows and cares of life was prepared for his dread office. The bills of mortality assign a name to the mortal disease different from the true one.

Cheerfulness and equanimity are about the only traits that have invariably marked the life of those who have lived to extreme old age. Nothing is more clearly settled by experience, than that grief acts as a slow poison, not only in the immediate infliction of pain, but in gradually impairing the powers of life, and in subtracting from the sum of our days.

If, then, by any process of instruction, discipline and mental force, we can influence our circumstances, banish grief and create cheerfulness, we can, in the same degree, reduce rules, for the pursuit of happiness, to a system; and make that system a matter of science. Can we not do this? The very million who deride the idea of seeking for enjoyment through the medium of instruction, unconsciously exercise the power in question to a certain extent — though not to the extent, of which they are capable. All those wise individuals, who have travelled with equanimity and cheerfulness through the diversified scenes of life, making the most of its good, and the least of its evils, bear a general

testimony to the truth of this fact. We find in them a conviction that they had such power, and a force of character that enabled them to act according to their convictions.

No person deserves the name of a philosopher, who is not wise in relation to the great purpose of life. In the same proportion, then, as I convince you, that by our own voluntary, physical and mental discipline, we can act upon circumstances, and influence our temperament, and thus bear directly upon our happiness, I shall be able to stir up your powers, and call forth your energy of character, to apply that discipline in your own case. In the same proportion I shall be instrumental in training you to the highest exercise of your reason, and the attainment of true philosophy.

The elements upon which you are to operate, are your circumstances, habits, and modes of thinking and acting. The *philosopher of circumstances*[1] denies that you can act upon these. But, by his unwearied efforts to propagate his system, he proves, that he does not himself act upon his avowed convictions. The impulse of all our actions from birth to death, the spring of all our movements is a conviction, that we can alter and improve our condition. We have a consciousness stronger than our reason, that we can control our

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[1] E.g. Robert Owen and others of the atheistical school.

circumstances. We can change our regimen and habits; and by patience and perseverance, even our temperament. Every one can cite innumerable and most melancholy instances of those who have done it for evil. The habit of indulging in opium, tobacco, ardent spirits, or any of the pernicious narcotics, soon reduces the physical and mental constitution to that temperament, in which these stimulants are felt to be necessary. A corresponding change is produced in the mind and disposition. The frequent and regular use of medicine, though it may have been wholly necessary at first, finally becomes an inveterate habit. No phenomenon of physiology is more striking, than the facility with which the human constitution immediately commences a conformity to whatsoever change of circumstances, as of climate, habit, or aliment, we impose upon it. It is a most impressive proof, that the Creator has formed man capable of becoming the creature of all climates and conditions.

If we may change our temperament both of body and mind for evil, as innumerable examples prove that we may, why not as easily for good? Our habits certainly are under our control; and our modes of thinking, however little the process may have been explained, are, in some way, shaped by our voluntary discipline. We have high powers of self-command, as every one who has made the effort to exercise them, must be conscious. We have inexhaustible moral force

for self-direction, if we will only recognise and exert it. We owe most of our disgusts and disappointments, our corroding passions and unreasonable desires, our fretfulness, gloom and self-torment, neither to nature nor fate; but to ourselves, and our reckless indifference to those rules, that ought to guide our pursuit of happiness. Let a higher education and a truer wisdom disenthral us from our passions, and dispel the mists of opinion and silence the authority of example. Let us commence the pursuit of happiness on the right course, and seek it where alone it is to be found. Equanimity and moderation will shed their mild radiance upon our enjoyments; and in our reverses we shall summon resignation and force of character; and, according to the sublime ancient maxim, we shall become masters of events and of ourselves.

I am sensible that there will always be a sufficient number of those, deemed philosophers, who, notwithstanding their rules, have wandered far from their aim. Such there will always be, so long as there are stirring passions within or hidden dangers around us; and there will be shipwrecks, so long as human cupidity and ambition tempt self-confident and unskilful mariners upon the fickle and tumultuous bosom of the ocean. But is this proof that a disciplined pilot would not be most likely to make the voyage in safety, or that the study of navigation is useless?

My affectionate desire is, to draw your attention

to those moral resources which your Creator has placed at your command. How many millions have floated down the current in the indolent supineness of inactivity, who, had they been aware of their internal means of active resistance, would have risen above the pressure of their circumstances! Who can deny, that there is a manifest difference, even as things now are, between the moral courage of action and endurance, put forth by a disciplined and reflecting mind, possessing force of character, and the stupid and passive abandonment, with which a savage meets pain and death?

May you speed on your voyage under the influence of the *lucida sidera*, or, in higher phrase, may Providence be your guide.

Letter II. THE PHYSICAL, ORGANIC AND MORAL LAWS

In relation to this most important subject, read Combe on the Constitution of Man, a book, which I consider admirable for its broad, philosophic, and just views of the laws of the universe, in their bearing upon the constitution of our physical and moral nature. You are not unaware, that I had presented you similar views, and inculcated the same master principles, long before this excellent work was published. Thousands, in all ages, have entertained the same extended conceptions

of the divine plan, and its bearing upon man and all beings, upon this and all other worlds. But the honor belongs to this author, to have given form and systematic arrangement to these views. I have given my thoughts upon this subject at the commencement of my letters, and have subjoined remarks upon the Christian religion at the close, because I deem that M. Droz, in not recurring to these fundamental principles at the beginning of his work, and in dwelling with so little earnestness upon the hope of the gospel, as an element of happiness, at the close, has left chasms in it which ought to be supplied.

The sect, numerous in my day, in yours, I trust, will have disappeared, who hold that religion and philosophy are militant and irreconcilable principles. Such persons are accustomed to brand these broad views of Providence and moral obligation with the odium of impiety. You will hardly need my assurance, that, if I thought with them, *my right hand should forget its cunning*, before I would allow anything to escape my pen which might have the least tendency to impair in your minds the future and eternal sanctions of virtue. I shall hereafter enlarge upon my persuasion, that, so far from being in opposition, religion and philosophy, when rightly understood, will be found resting on the same immutable foundation. It is because the misguided friends of religion have attempted to sustain them, as separate and hostile interests, in my

view, that the former has made so little progress towards becoming universal. It will one day be understood, that whatever wars with reason and common sense, is equally hostile to religion. The simple and unchangeable truths of Christianity will be found to violate none of our most obvious convictions. Truth will reassume her legitimate reign. Piety, religion and morals, our best interests for this life, and our surest preparations for a future one, will be found exactly conformable to the eternal order of things, and the system of the gospel will become universal, according to its legitimate claims. True piety, in my mind, is equally our duty, our wisdom and happiness. To behold God everywhere in his works, to hold communion with him in a contemplative and admiring spirit, to love, and trust him, to find, in the deep and constantly present persuasion of his being and attributes, a sentiment of exhaustless cheerfulness and excitement to duty, I hold to be the source of the purest and sublimest pleasure, that earth can afford.

True philosophy unfolds the design of final causes with a calm and humble wisdom. It finds the Creator everywhere, and always acting in wisdom and power. It traces the highest benevolence of intention, where the first aspect showed no apparent purpose, or one that seemed to tend to misery; offering new inducements to learn the first and last lesson of religion, and the ultimate attainment of human wisdom —

resignation to the will of God. In vindicating his ways to men, it declares that so long as we do not understand the laws of our being and so long as we transgress them, either ignorantly, or wilfully and unconsciously, misery to ourselves must just as certainly follow as that we can neither resist nor circumvent them; and that the Omnipotent has forged every link of the chain, that connects our own unhappiness with every transgression of the laws of our nature.

We find ourselves making a part of an existing universe which neither ignorance, nor wisdom, doubting, nor confidence can alter. If we know the order, of which we are the subjects, and conform to it, we are happy. If we ignorantly, or wilfully transgress it, the order is in no degree changed, or impeded. It moves irresistibly on, and the opposition is crushed. How wisdom and benevolence are reconcilable with the permission of this ignorance and opposition, in other words, why partial evil exists in God's universe, it is not my object to inquire. The inquiry would not only be fruitless, but would in no degree alter the fact, that what we call evil does exist. It is enough for us to know, that, as far as human research has reached, or can reach, the more profoundly we investigate the subject, the more clearly are design, wisdom and benevolence discoverable. Beyond our ken, right reason, guided by humility, would infer, that, where we cannot trace the impress of these attributes, it is not because they are not

discoverable, but because our powers are not equal to the discovery. If we had a broader vision, and were more fully acquainted with the relations of all parts of God's universe, the one to the other, and all the reasons of the permanent ordinances of his government, we should be able to understand the necessity of partial evil to the general good; we should understand, why it rains on the waste ocean, when drought consigns whole countries to aridity and desolation; in a word, why ignorance, transgression, misery and death have a place in our system.

All that we now know is, that the natural laws of this system are universal, invariable, unbending; that physical and moral tendencies are the same all over our world; and we have every reason to believe, over all other worlds. Wherever moral beings keep in harmony with these laws, there is no instance, in which happiness is not the result. Men never enjoy health, vigor, and felicity in disobedience to them. The whole infinite contrivance of everything above, around, and within us, appears directed to certain benevolent issues; and all the laws of nature are in perfect harmony with the whole constitution of man.

I shall not enter upon the subtle controversies of moral philosophers, as to the fundamental principle of moral obligation, whether it be expediency, the nature of things, or the will of God? In my view these are rather questions about words, than things. The nature of

things is a part of the will of God; and expediency is conformity to this unchanging order. An action derives its moral complexion from being conformed to the will of God, and the nature of things; and whatever is so conformed, is expedient; consequently all the different foundations of morals, when examined, are found to be precisely the same.

My notions of morality are, that it is conformity to the physical, organic and moral laws of the universe. Some will choose to call it expediency; others, the will of God; and others still, the constitution of things. These views, when reduced to their elements, are the same, call them by what names we may. We may obviously divide these laws into three classes. The first series we call physical laws, or those which act upon the material universe, and upon ourselves as a part of that universe. The second we call organic, or those which regulate the origin, growth, well-being and dissolution of organized beings. The last, denominated moral, act chiefly on the intellectual universe. They are founded on our relations to the sentient universe and God.

We infer from analogy, that these laws always have been, are, and always will be, invariably the same; and that they prevail alike in every portion of God's universe. We so judge, because we believe the existing order of things to be the wisest and the best. We know that the physical laws actually do prevail alike in every

part of our world, and as far beyond it, as the highest helps of astronomy can aid our researches into the depths of immensity. Is it not probable, that if we could investigate the system, as far as the utmost stretch of thought, we should find no point, where the laws of gravity, light, heat and motion do not prevail; where the sentient beings are not restricted to the same moral relations, as in our world? Wherever the empire of science has extended, we note these laws equally prevalent, in a molecule and a world, and from the lowest order of sentient beings up to man. The arrangement of the great whole, it should seem, must be a single emanation from the same wisdom and will, perfectly uniform throughout the whole empire. What an impressive motive to study these laws, and conform to them, is it, to know, that they are as irresistible, as the divine power, as universal, as the divine presence, as permanent as the divine existence; — that there is no evading them, that no art can disconnect misery from transgressing them, that no change of place or time, that not death, nor any transformation which our conscious being can undergo, will, during the revolutions of eternity, dispense any more with the necessity of observing these laws, than during our present transitory existence in clay!

I need not dwell a moment upon the proofs of the absolute identity of the physical laws. No one need be told, that a ship floats, water descends, heat warms, and

cold freezes, and that all physical properties of matter are the same over the globe. We shall only show by a few palpable examples, that our system is arranged in conformity to the organic laws. Every discovery in the kingdom of animated nature developes new instances.

In the tropical regions, the muscular energy is less, in proportion as the natural fertility of the soil is greater. In colder latitudes muscular energy is increased; and ruder elements, and a more sterile nature, proportion their claims accordingly. In arctic regions no farinaceous food ripens. Sojourners in that climate find, that bread and vegetable diet do not furnish the requisite nutriment; that pure animal food is the only sustenance that will there maintain the tone of the system, imparting a delightful vigor and buoyancy of mind. Strange as it may seem, to conform to this necessity, these dreary countries abound in infinite numbers and varieties of animals, fowls and fishes. The climate favors the drying and preserving of animal food, which is thus prepared to sustain the inhabitants, when nature imprisons the material creation in chains of ice, and wraps herself up in her mantle of snow. Thus, if we survey the whole globe, the food, climate and other circumstances will be found accommodated to the inhabitants; and they, as far as they conform to the organic laws, will be found adapted to their climate and mode of subsistence.

In all positions man finds himself called upon, by

the clear indications of the organic laws, to take that free and cheerful exercise, which is calculated to develope vigorous muscular, nervous and mental action. The laborer digs, and the hunter chases for subsistence; but finds at the same time health and cheerfulness. The penalty of the violation of this organic law by the indulgence of indolence is debility, enfeebled action, both bodily and mental, dyspepsia with all its horrid train, and finally death. On the other hand, the penalty of over exertion, debauchery, intemperance, and excess of every species, comes in other forms of disease and suffering. These laws, though not so obviously and palpably so, are as invariable and inevitable, as those of attraction, or magnetism; and yet the great mass of our species, even in what we call enlightened and educated countries, do not recognise, and obey them. It is in vain for them, that, from age to age, the same consequences have ensued, as the eternal heralds of the divinity, proclaiming to all people, in all languages, that his laws carry their sanctions with them. One of our most imperious duties, then, is to study these laws, to make ourselves conversant with their bearing upon our pursuit of happiness, that we may conform to them. When we have become acquainted with their universality and resistless power, we shall indulge no puerile hope that we may enjoy the present gratification of infringing them, and then evade the ultimate

consequences. We shall as soon calculate to change condition with the tenants of the air and the waters, as expect to divert any one of them from its onward course.

He then is wise, who looks round him with a searching eye to become fully possessed, without the coloring of sophistical wishes and self-deceiving expectation, of the actual conditions of his being; and who, instead of imagining, that the unchangeable courses of nature will conform to him, his ignorance, interests or passions, shapes his course so as to conform to them. He will no more expect, for example, that he can indulge his appetites, give scope to his passions, and yield himself to the seductions of life, and escape without a balance of misery in consequence, than he would calculate to throw himself unhurt, from a mountain precipice.

So far as regards himself, he will study the organic laws, in reference to their bearing upon his mind, his health, his morals, his happiness. He will strive to be cheerful; for he knows that it is a part of the constitution of things, that cheerfulness tends to physical and mental health. He will accustom himself to exercise, and will avoid indolence, because he understands that he was formed to be an active being, and that he cannot yield to his slothful propensities, without forfeiting the delightful feeling of energy, and the power to operate upon events, instead of being

passively borne along by them. He will be active, that he may feel conscious power. He will rise above the silent and invisible influence of sloth, and will exult in a feeling of force and self-command, for the same reasons that the eagle loves to soar aloft, and look upon the sun; because a sensation of power, and a sublime liberty are enjoyed in the flight. He will be temperate in the gratification of his appetites and passions, because he is aware, that every excessive indulgence strikes a balance of suffering against him, which he must discharge soon, or late; and helps to forge a chain of habit, that will render it more difficult for him to resist the next temptation to indulgence. He will rise early from sleep, because nature calls him to early rising, in all her cheerful voices, in the matin song of birds, the balmy morning freshness and elasticity of the air, and the renovated cry of joy from the whole animal creation. He will do this, because he has early heard complaints from all sides of the shortness of life, and because he is sensible, that he who rises every day two hours before the common period, will prolong the ordinary duration of life by adding six years of the pleasantest part of existence. He will rise early, because next after the intemperate, no human being offers a more unworthy spectacle, than is presented by the man, who calls himself rational and immortal, who sees before him a greater amount of knowledge, duty and happiness, than he could hope to compass in a thousand

years; and who yet turns himself indolently from side to side, during the hours of the awakening of nature, enjoying only the luxury of a savage or a brute, in a state of dozing existence little superior to the dreamless sleep of the grave. I test the character of a youth of whom I wish to entertain hope, by this criterion. If he can nobly resist his propensities, if he can act from reason against his inclinations, if he can trample indolence under foot, if he can always make the effort to show the intellectual in the ascendant over the animal being, I note him as one, who will be worthy of eminence, whether he attain it or not.

In a word, there is something of dignity and intellectual grandeur in the aspect of the young, who live in obedience to the organic and moral laws, which commands at once that undefined, and almost unconscious estimation and respect, which all minds involuntarily pay to true greatness. Such was the image of the poet, when he delineated the angel *severe in youthful beauty* ; and such that of the Mantuan, when he compares Neptune rebuking and hushing the winds, to a venerable man, allaying by his words of peace, the uproar of an infuriated populace.

Were I to enter into details of your obligations to understand and obey these laws, as they relate to the various periods, pursuits and duties of life, I should offer you a volume, instead of an outline, which, from the examples given, your own thoughts can easily fill

out. But that I may not leave these momentous duties wholly untouched, I shall dwell a moment on their bearing upon a most important epoch of life, one which, perhaps more than any other, gives the color to future years either of happiness or misery.

When the young reach that period, when nature invokes them to assume the obligations of connubial life, this knowledge and conformity will cause them to pause, and reflect on what is before them, and will interdict them from following the inconsiderate throng, in entering into that decisive condition, consulting no other lights, than a morbid fancy, those impulses which are common to all other animals, or sordid calculations of interest. They are well apprized, that the declamations of satire, and the bitter and common jest of all civilized people, upon wedded life, have but too much foundation in truth. They perceive at a glance, that those who with such views take on them the obligations of the conjugal state have no right to hope anything better than satiety, ill-humor, monotonous disgust, and the insupportable imprisonment of two persons, in intimate and indissoluble partnership, who find weariness and penance in being together, who are reminded, at once by the void in their hearts, and their mutual inability to fill it, that they must not only endure the pain of being chained together, but feel, that they are thus barred from a happier union, partly by shame, partly by public opinion, and, more than all, by the

obstacles, wisely thrown by all civilized nations in the way of obtaining divorce. There can be no doubt, that the common views of the universal unhappiness of the wedded state in all Christian countries are the result of gross exaggeration. Making all allowances for errors from this source, language is too feeble, to delineate the countless and unutterable miseries, that, in all time since the institution of marriage, as recognised by Christianity, have resulted from these incompatible unions, for the simple reason, that, in this transaction, of so much more moment than almost any other, scarcely one of the parties in a thousand, it is believed, takes the least note of it in relation to the organic and moral laws. The young and the aged, the feeble and the strong, the healthy and the diseased, the beautiful and the deformed, the mild and the fierce, the intellectual and the purely animal, the rich and the poor, bring their incompatibilities to a common stock, add ruinous excesses of temperament together, unite under a spell, reckless of the live-long consequences involved, and arouse from a short trance to the conscious and sober sadness of waking misery. To them the hackneyed declamations against marriage have a terrible import. Weariness, discontent, ennui, relieved only by the fierceness of domestic discord, and a wretchedness aggravated by the consciousness that there is no escape from it, but by death, is the issue of a union consummated under illusive expectations of more than

mortal happiness. How many millions have found this to be the reality of their youthful dreams! Yet if this most important union is contracted under animal impulses, without any regard to moral and intellectual considerations, without any investigation of the organic and social fitness of the case, without inquiry into the compatibility, without a mutual understanding of temperament, dispositions, and habits; who cannot foresee, that the propensities will soon languish in satiety; that repentance and discord and disgust and disaffection and loathing, in proportion to the remembered raptures forever passed away, will rudely open the eyes of the parties to their real and permanent condition, and that by a law as certain and inevitable, as that which propels water down a precipice! And this is not the darkest shade in the picture. By the same laws children are born with the doubled excess of the temperaments of their parents; or puny, undeveloped and feeble, or racked by all the fiercer passions of our nature. Opening their eyes in this scene, which the guilty thoughtlessness of successive generations has rendered little better than a vast lazar house, evil example, gloom, unregulated tempers, repining and misery are their first and last spectacles. They advance into life to repeat the errors of their parents, to make common stock of their misery anew, to multiply the number of the unhappy, or perhaps worse, to tenant hospitals, and the receptacles of human ignorance and

misery.

Can any question be imagined in life, in regard to which you ought so deliberately to pause, investigate and weigh all the bearings of the case? And yet can any other important transaction be named, upon which, in this view, so little thought is bestowed, and which is entered into with such reckless blindness to consequences? He, who determines to respect the laws of his being, will study his own temperament, and that of the other party, and weigh the excesses and defects, as one convinced by the general analogy of animated nature, that the physical and mental character, the constitutional and moral temperament of the offspring, in the ordinary course of things, will be a compound of that of the parents. If he find himself subject to any peculiar corporeal infirmity, hereditary tendency to disease, overbearing propensities towards indulgence, or excess, unbalanced passions, or morbid mental obliquity, he will be studiously solicitous, that the other party shall not be laboring under similar disqualifications. I may not follow out the subordinate details. Your thoughts cannot but suggest innumerable considerations, that I pass in silence. Will any moral being, capable of conscientious views of the ultimate bearing of his actions, dare to treat this subject, all momentous as it is, with unphilosophic levity and ridicule? Will any one say, that such discussions ought to be pretermitted by a parent? I affirm, that such are

not my notions of the obligations of decorum and propriety. The world has been too long peopled with mere animals bound by the laws, and doomed to the responsibilities of rationality, and yet acting like the orders below them, without a capacity for finding their happiness. If, being men, and inheriting either the privileges, or the doom of men, we will choose to consider ourselves merely as animals, shall we dare to arraign Providence, or fill the world with murmurs, if we enjoy not the peculiar pleasures of either race, and are subject to the miseries of both? When you are aware that such considerations must affect not only your own happiness, or misery, but that of your offspring, a whole coming generation, and the hopes of the regeneration and improvement of a world, you will be sensible, that silence in such a discussion would be guilty pride. I perfectly coincide with the conclusions of Combe upon this subject, and transcribe for your benefit an admirable exposition of my views from the notes appended to his book on the Constitution of Man.

'It is a very common error, not only among philosophers, but among practical men, to imagine that the *feelings* of the mind are communicated to it through the medium of the *intellect* ; and, in particular, that if no indelicate objects reach the eyes, or expressions penetrate the ears, perfect purity will necessarily reign within the soul; and, carrying this mistake into practice, they are prone to object to all discussion of the subjects

treated of under the ‘Organic Laws,’ in works designed for general use. But their principle of reasoning is fallacious, and the practical result has been highly detrimental to society. The *feelings* have existence and activity distinct from the *intellect* ; they spur it on to obtain their own gratification; and it may become either their slave or guide, according as it is enlightened concerning their constitution and objects, and the laws of nature to which they are subjected. The most profound philosophers have inculcated this doctrine; and, by phrenological observation, it is demonstrably established. The organs of the feelings are distinct from those of the intellectual faculties; they are larger; and, as each faculty, *c?teris paribus*, acts with a power proportionate to the size of its organ, the feelings are obviously the active or impelling powers. The cerebellum, or organ of Amativeness, is the largest of the whole mental organs; and, being endowed with natural activity, it fills the mind spontaneously with emotions and suggestions which may be directed, controlled and resisted, in outward manifestation, by intellect and moral sentiment, but which cannot be prevented from arising nor eradicated after they exist. The whole question, therefore, resolves itself into this, Whether it is most beneficial to enlighten and direct that feeling, or (under the influence of an error in philosophy, and false delicacy founded on it), to permit it to riot in all the fierceness of a blind animal instinct,

withdrawn from the eye of reason, but not thereby deprived of its vehemence and importunity. The former course appears to me to be the only one consistent with reason and morality; and I have adopted it in reliance on the good sense of my readers, that they will at once discriminate between practical instruction concerning this feeling, addressed to the intellect, and lascivious representations addressed to the mere propensity itself; with the latter of which the enemies of all improvement may attempt to confound my observations. Every function of the mind and body is instituted by the Creator; all may be abused; and it is impossible regularly to avoid abuse of them, except by being instructed in their nature, objects, and relations. This instruction ought to be addressed exclusively to the intellect; and when it is so, it is science of the most beneficial description. The propriety, nay, necessity, of acting on this principle, becomes more and more apparent, when it is considered that the discussions of the text suggest only intellectual ideas to individuals in whom the feeling in question is naturally weak, and that such minds perceive no indelicacy in knowledge which is calculated to be useful; while, on the other hand, persons in whom the feeling is naturally strong, are precisely those who stand in need of direction, and to whom, of all others, instruction is the most necessary.'

No art in these days is better understood, by those who have found their interest in investigating the

subject, than that of improving the races of the lower animals. Every species, upon which the effort has been made, has been found perfectly subservient to the art. The desirable forms and qualities are selected, and the proper means of improvement applied. The wished result is not obtained to its full extent in the first generation; but a uniform approximation commences; and every successive amelioration brings the animal nearer to the requisite standard. The whole art is founded on observation of the organic laws of the races, and the general fact, that the instincts, qualities, temperament, form and color of the animals are hereditary, and transmissible. These are truths so well known, that the grazier, and the shepherd apply them constantly in rearing their domestic animals. Shall they be disregarded, when it becomes known, that they bear equally upon the improvement of man, *next in dignity to angels* ? Shall these considerations rear a nobler race of animals, and, by overlooking them, shall man alone be consigned to degradation?

Letter III. THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

I proceed to examples and developments of the doctrine, chiefly insisted upon in the former letter. I draw them chiefly from Mr Combe, premising, that they exactly coincide with views which you cannot but

remember to have heard me advance, before I had read his book on the constitution of man. It is a law of the animal creation, that not only the natural but even the acquired qualities are transmitted by parents to their offspring; and man, as an organized being, is subject to laws similar to those which govern the organization of the lower animals. 'Children,' says Dr Pritchard, 'resemble in feature and constitution both parents; but I think more generally the father.' Changes produced by external causes in the constitution and appearance of the individual are temporary; and, in general, acquired characters are transient, terminating with the individual, and having no influence on the progeny. The mental development of the Circassian race is known to be of the highest order. The nobles of Persia are children of Circassian mothers, and they are remarkable, in that country, for their mental and corporeal superiority over the other classes. Every one acquainted with the condition of our southern slaves, well understands the obvious fact, that the mulattoes are much superior, in quickness and capability of acquiring and retaining knowledge, to the negroes. The Indian half-breeds are remarkable for the immediate ascendency, which they acquire in their tribes over the full-blooded Indians. In oriental India, the intermarriages of the Hindoos with Europeans have produced an intermediate race much superior to the natives, and destined, it is already predicted, to be the future sovereigns of India. In fact,

physiology has deduced no conclusion more certain, than that, in ordinary cases, the temperament and intellect of the children are a compound of that of their parents. Of this I might produce innumerable instances from history of the Alexanders, C?sars, and Antonines, the distinguished great and wise, of ancient and modern times; and equally, in the opposite direction, in the Neros and Caligulas, the depraved and abandoned of all ages and countries, where observation has been able to trace their parentage.

One of the most fertile sources of human misery, then, arises from persons uniting in marriage, whose tempers, talents and dispositions do not harmonize. If it be true that natural talents and dispositions are connected by the Creator with particular constitutions of the parents, it is obviously one of his institutions, that these constitutions should be most seriously taken into the calculation in forming a compact for life. The Creator, having formed such ordinances in the unchangeable arrangements of nature, as to confer happiness, when they are discovered and observed, and misery, when they are unknown or unobserved, it is obviously our best wisdom to investigate and respect them. If individuals, after this truth reaches their conviction should go on, in imitation of the common example, to form reckless connexions, which can only eventuate in sorrow, it is obvious that they must do so either from contempt of the effects of this influence

upon the happiness of domestic life, and a secret belief, that they may in some way evade its consequences, or from the predominance of avarice, or some other animal feeling, precluding them from yielding obedience to what they see to be an institution of the Creator.

At the first aspect of this subject three alternatives are presented, one of which, it should seem, must have a determining power upon the offspring. Either, in the first place, the corporeal and mental constitution, which the parents themselves inherit at birth, are transmitted so absolutely, as that the children are exact copies of the parents, without variation or modification, sex following sex; or, in the second place, the inherent qualities of the father and mother combine, and are transmitted in a modified form to the offspring; or, thirdly, the qualities of the children are determined jointly by the constitution of the parents, and the faculties and temperaments, which predominated in power and energy at the particular period, when the organic existence of the child commenced.

If these views are correct, and if a man and woman about to marry, have not only their own domestic happiness but that of five or more human beings depending on their attention to considerations essentially the same as the foregoing, how differently ought this contract to be viewed from the common aspect, which it presents to persons assuming its

solemn stipulations! Yet it is astonishing, to what extent pecuniary and other minor considerations will induce men to investigate and observe the natural laws; and how small an influence moral and rational considerations exert upon this most important of all earthly connexions.

I cannot forbear, under this head, quoting entire another passage from the author, from whom I have substantially drawn many of the foregoing observations.

‘Rules, however, are best taught by examples; and I shall, therefore, proceed to mention some facts that have fallen under my own notice, or been communicated to me from authentic sources, illustrative of the practical consequences of infringing the law of hereditary descent.

‘A man, aged about fifty, possessed a brain, in which the animal, moral, and knowing intellectual organs were all strong, but the reflecting weak. He was pious, but destitute of education; he married an unhealthy young woman, deficient in moral development, but of considerable force of character; and several children were born. The father and mother were far from being happy; and, when the children attained to eighteen or twenty years of age, they were adepts in every species of immorality and profligacy; they picked their father’s pockets, stole his goods, and got them sold back to him, by accomplices, for money,

which was spent in betting and cock-fighting, drinking, and low debauchery. The father was heavily grieved; but knowing only two resources, he beat the children severely as long as he was able, and prayed for them; his words were, that "if, *after that*, it pleased the Lord to make vessels of wrath of them, the Lord's will must just be done." I mention this last observation, not in jest, but in great seriousness. It was impossible not to pity the unhappy father; yet who that sees the institutions of the Creator to be in themselves wise, but in this instance to have been directly violated, will not acknowledge that the bitter pangs of the poor old man were the consequences of his own ignorance; and that it was an erroneous view of the divine administration, which led him to overlook his own mistakes, and to attribute to the Almighty the purpose of making vessels of wrath of his children, as the only explanation which he could give of their wicked dispositions. Who that sees the cause of his misery must not lament that his piety should not have been enlightened by philosophy, and directed to obedience, in the first instance, to the organic institutions of the Creator, as one of the prescribed conditions, without observance of which he had no title to expect a blessing upon his offspring.

'In another instance, a man, in whom the animal organs, particularly those of Combativeness and Destructiveness, were very large, but with a pretty fair moral and intellectual development, married, against

her inclination, a young woman, fashionably and showily educated, but with a very decided deficiency in Conscientiousness. They soon became unhappy, and even blows were said to have passed between them, although they belonged to the middle rank of life. The mother, in this case, employed the children to deceive and plunder the father, and, latterly, spent the produce in drink. The sons inherited the deficient morality of the mother, and the ill temper of the father. The family fireside became a theatre of war, and, before the sons attained a majority, the father was glad to get them removed from his house, as the only means by which he could feel even his life in safety from their violence; for they had by that time retaliated the blows with which he had visited them in their younger years; and he stated that he actually considered his life to be in danger from his own offspring.

'In another family, the mother possesses an excellent development of the moral and intellectual organs, while, in the father, the animal organs predominate in great excess. She has been the unhappy victim of ceaseless misfortune, originating from the misconduct of her husband. Some of the children have inherited the father's brain, and some the mother's; and of the sons whose heads resembled the father's, several have died through mere debauchery and profligacy under thirty years of age; whereas, those who resemble the mother are alive and little contaminated, even

amidst all the disadvantages of evil example.

‘On the other hand, I am not acquainted with a single instance in which the moral and intellectual organs predominated in size, in both father and mother, and whose external circumstances also permitted their general activity, in which the *whole* children did not partake of a moral and intellectual character, differing slightly in degrees of excellence one from another, but all presenting the decided predominance of the human over the animal faculties.

‘There are well-known examples of the children of religious and moral fathers exhibiting dispositions of a very inferior description; but in all of these instances that I have been able to observe, there has been a large development of the animal organs in the one parent, which was just controlled, but not much more, by the moral and intellectual powers; and in the other parent, the *moral* organs did not appear to be in large proportion. The unfortunate child inherited the large animal development of the one, with the defective moral development of the other; and, in this way, was inferior to both. The way to satisfy one’s self on this point, is to examine the heads of the parents. In all such cases, a large base of the brain, which is the region of the animal propensities, will very probably be found in one or other of them.

‘Another organic law of the animal kingdom deserves attention; viz. that by which marriages betwixt

blood relations tend decidedly to the deterioration of the physical and mental qualities of the offspring. In Spain, kings marry their nieces, and, in this country, first and second cousins marry without scruple; although every philosophical physiologist will declare that this is in direct opposition to the institutions of nature. This law holds also in the vegetable kingdom. "A provision, of a very simple kind, is, in some cases, made to prevent the male and female blossoms of the same plant from breeding together, this being found to hurt the breed of vegetables, just as breeding in and in does the breed of animals. It is contrived, that the dust shall be shed by the male blossom before the female is ready to be affected by it, so that the impregnation must be performed by the dust of some other plant, and in this way the breed be crossed."'

Such considerations, I hope, will induce you to exercise cautious examination of this subject, if either of you should ever be placed in circumstances to contemplate assuming the duties of the wedded life. If you do not, you will have cast the pursuit of happiness upon the die of chance at the very outset of your career. Allow me, before I dismiss the book, from which I have already so liberally quoted, to extract one passage more, touching the application of the natural laws to the practical arrangements of life.

'If a system of living and occupation were to be framed for human beings, founded on the exposition of

their nature, which I have now given, it would be something like this.

‘1st. So many hours a day would require to be dedicated by every individual in health, to the exercise of his nervous and muscular systems, in labor calculated to give scope to these functions. The reward of obeying this requisite of his nature would be health, and a joyous animal existence; the punishment of neglect is disease, low spirits and death.

‘2dly. So many hours a day should be spent in the sedulous employment of the knowing and reflecting faculties; in studying the qualities of external objects, and their relations; also the nature of all animated beings, and their relations; not with the view of accumulating mere abstract and barren knowledge, but of enjoying the positive pleasure of mental activity, and of turning every discovery to account, as a means of increasing happiness, or alleviating misery. The leading object should always be to find out the relationship of every object to our own nature, organic, animal, moral, and intellectual, and to keep that relationship habitually in mind, so as to render our acquirements directly gratifying to our various faculties. The reward of this conduct would be an incalculably great increase of pleasure, in the very act of acquiring knowledge of the real properties of external objects, together with a great accession of power in reaping ulterior advantages, and in avoiding disagreeable affections.

‘3dly. So many hours a day ought to be devoted to the cultivation and gratification of our moral sentiments; that is to say, in exercising these in harmony with intellect, and especially in acquiring the habit of admiring, loving, and yielding obedience to the Creator and his institutions. This last object is of vast importance. Intellect is barren of practical fruit, however rich it may be in knowledge, until it is fired and prompted to act by moral sentiment. In my view, knowledge by itself is comparatively worthless and impotent, compared with what it becomes when vivified by elevated emotions. It is not enough that intellect is informed; the moral faculties must simultaneously cooperate; yielding obedience to the precepts which the intellect recognises to be true. One way of cultivating the sentiments would be for men to meet and act together, on the fixed principles which I am now endeavoring to unfold, and to exercise on each other in mutual instruction, and in united adoration of the great and glorious Creator, the several faculties of Benevolence, Veneration, Hope, Ideality, Wonder, and Justice. The reward of acting in this manner would be a communication of direct and intense pleasure to each other; for I refer to every individual who has ever had the good fortune to pass a day or an hour with a really benevolent, pious, honest, and intellectual man, whose soul swelled with adoration of his Creator, whose intellect was replenished with knowledge of his works,

and whose whole mind was instinct with sympathy for human happiness, whether such a day did not afford him the most pure, elevated, and lasting gratification he ever enjoyed. Such an exercise, besides, would invigorate the whole moral and intellectual powers, and fit them to discover and obey the divine institutions.'

You will study, and obey the moral laws of the universe, of which you are a part, because you are moral beings, and because obedience to these laws constitutes the tie of affinity between you, the higher orders of being and the divinity. You will respect them, because it is the glory of your nature, that you alone, of all creatures below, are morally subject to them. Laying out of the question their momentous sanctions in the eternal future, you must be aware, that the Creator has annexed pleasure to obeying them, and pain to their violation as inevitably, as gravity belongs to matter. One would think, it must be enough to determine the conduct of a being, who laid claim to the character of rational, to know, that no art nor dexterity, that no repentance nor return to obedience, can avert the consequences of a single violation of these laws; and that no imaginable present good can counterbalance the future misery, that must accrue in consequence.

In regard, for example, to the practice of the most common and every day duties, who can doubt the truth of the trite adage, *honesty is the best policy* ? This is, in effect, no more than saying, that the moral laws of the

universe are constituted upon such principles, as to make it every man's interest to obey them. It is as certain, that they are so constituted, as that fire will burn, or water drown you; and when you understand this constitution, it marks the same want of a sane mind to violate them, as to be unable to keep out of these elements. Yet the greater portion of the species do not constantly act upon a full belief in this hackneyed maxim. They think apparently, that they can in some way obtain the imagined advantage of dishonesty and evade the connected evil, not aware, that detection and diminished confidence may be avoided, for once or twice; but not the loss of self-respect, the pureness and integrity of internal principle, the certainty of forging the first link in a chain of bad habits, and a thousand painful consequences, which it would be easy to enumerate in detail. Almost every one deems that he may safely put forth every day false compliment, double-dealing, deception on a small scale, and little frauds, not cognisable by any law or code of honor. In a word, if actions are a test of the sincerity of conviction, very few really are convinced that *honesty is the best policy*.

We hold the man insane who should leap from a high building upon the pavement, or attempt to grapple with the blind power of the elements. But it is scarcely the subject of our remark, that the multitude about us, in the most important, as well as the minute concerns of

life, live in habitual recklessness or violation of the organic and moral laws; and yet we certainly know, that whoever infringes them is as sure to pay the penalty, as he who madly places himself in opposition to the material laws. I can never present this astonishing and universal blindness in too many forms of repetition, if the effect is to bring you to view these two species of folly in the same light.

The reason clearly is, that in too many instances, men take no pains to acquaint themselves with these laws, and their bearing upon the constitution of man; or, deceived by the clamors of the inclinations, and the illusions of present pleasure and advantage, when balanced with future and remote penalties, they commit the infractions, and hope, that between the certain pleasure and the distant and contingent pain, they can interpose some evasion, and sever the consequences from the fault. The expectation always ends, like the alchymist's dream, and the projector's perpetual motion. Even in the apprehension of the consequences, the mind is paying the penalty of an unquiet conscience, and of an abatement of self-confidence, and self-respect, penalties, which very few earthly pleasures can compensate.

When I speak of these unchangeable laws, as emanations from the divine wisdom and goodness, as transcripts of the divine immutability, and as being the best of all possible arrangements, not to be superseded,

or turned from their course by the wisest of beings, you will not understand me to bear upon the consoling and scriptural doctrine of providence. I firmly believe, and trust in it; not, however, in the popular view. It would not increase my veneration for the Almighty, to suppose that his laws required exceptions and variations, to meet particular cases; nor that they would call for frequent suspensions and changes, to provide for contingencies not foreseen at the commencement of the mighty movements. Such are not the grounds of my trust in the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Being. I neither desire, nor expect any deviation of laws, as wise and good as they can be, in their general operation, to meet my particular wishes, or those of the friends most dear to me. I expect, that none of the powers of nature will change for me; I encourage no insane hopes, that things will forego their tendencies to meet my conveniences or pleasures. Prayer is a duty equally comforting and elevating; but my prayers are not, that these fixed laws of the divine wisdom may change for me; but that I may understand and conform to them. The providence, in which I believe, supposes no exceptions, infringements, or violations of the universal plan of the divine government. Miracles only seem such to us, because we see but a link or two in the endless chain of that plan. An ingenious mechanician constructs a clock, which will run many years, and only once in the whole period strike an alarm bell. It is a

miracle to those who comprehend not, that it was part of the original plan of the mechanician. May we not with more probability adopt the same reasoning, in relation to the recorded miracles, as parts of the original plan of the Eternal?

Piety, established upon a knowledge of these laws, and a respect for them, and associated with veneration for their author, is rational, consistent, firm and manly. It seeks, it expects nothing in the puerile presumption, that the ordinances of a code, fitted for the whole system of the Creator, will be wrested to the wants of an insect. In docility and meekness it labors for conformity to those ordinances; in other words, to the divine will. It violates no principle, and calls for the exercise of no faith, that is repugnant to the dictates of common sense, and the teaching of common observation. Piety, founded on such views, abides the scrutiny of the severest investigation. No vacillation of the mind from varying fortunes, no questionings of unbelief, doubt and despair, can shake it. It rests firmly on the basis of the divine attributes. It holds fast to the golden chain, the last link of which is riveted to the throne of the Eternal.

Thus it seems to me indispensable, as a pre-requisite to the pursuit of happiness, that the inquirer should hold large discourse with the physical, organic and moral laws; that he should carefully investigate their whole bearing upon his constitution;

that he should trace all their influences on him from the first hour, in which he opens his eyes on the light, to his departure out of life. I insist the more earnestly upon this, because in these days the study of the moral relations of things seems to me comparatively abandoned. The exact and natural sciences are studied, rather, it would seem, as an end, than a means. Natural philosophy, mathematics and astronomy may be highly useful; but who will compare these sciences, in regard to their utility and importance, with those, which guide the mind to their author, which teach the knowledge of his moral laws, which instruct us how to allay the passions, to moderate our expectations, and to establish morality on the basis of our regard to our own happiness?

If, then, you would give yourself to the patient study of the natural sciences, that you may gain reputation and the ability to be useful, much more earnestly will you study regimen, exercise, temperance, moderation, cheerfulness, the benefits of a balanced mind, and of a wise and philosophic conformity to an order of things, not a tittle of which you can change, that you may be resigned, useful and happy. All knowledge, which cannot be turned to this account, either as relates to yourselves, or others, is useless.

Innumerable counsels, in relation to your habits, your pleasures and pursuits, your studies, your tastes and modes of conduct, your *beau ideal* of natural and

moral beauty, your standard of dignity and worth of character, press upon my mind, and all in some way connected with the views, which I have just taken. But I shall be able to present such of them as I may deem worthy to find a place in these letters, perhaps with most propriety and effect, as suggested in the form of notes[2] appended to the chapters of the essay of M. Droz, a paraphrase of which I now offer you.

Letter IV. GENERAL VIEWS OF THE SUBJECT

Man is created to be happy.[3] His desires and the

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[2] These *Notes* will be found at the end of the volume. The small numerals, in the text, refer to them.

[3] The history of circumstances under which I commenced reading the book of M. Droz, sur l' art d' etre heureux, the substance of the first chapter of which is given as above, will not be irrelevant, I would hope, *to you*, if to others. It was a beautiful April morning, and I had wandered away from the town, with the book in my hand, among the hills. I inhaled a bland atmosphere that just ruffled half formed leaves, and shook from trees, shrubs and flowers the pearly drops and the delicious aroma of the season. A dun, purple, smoky vapor veiled the brilliancy of the sun and gave the face of nature its most exquisite coloring. A repose, like sleep, seemed to rest upon the earth, only interrupted by the ruminating of the flocks and herds on the hill sides. The bees sped away to their nectar cells from tree and flower, leaving upon the

dark and fleeting line of their passage through the air a lulling hum like the tones of an Eolian harp. A large town, with its ceaseless and heavy roll of mingled sounds, lay outstretched beneath my feet. Painted boats were slowly wending their way along a canal from the town, and winding their course round the foot of the hills. Before me was a vast panorama of activity, business, commerce and all the accompaniments of a busy town. A few paces behind me, and I was plunged in a forest where town and commerce and life were hidden as if by the shifting of a scene, and the jay screamed, and the woods showed as to the red man who had seen them centuries before. A beautiful spring branch murmured by me in its deep and flood-worn channel down the glen. A little advance spread the town before me. A little retreat gave me back to the wildness of nature in the forest. Here I had often enjoyed much of the little that life allows us to enjoy, in quiet communion with nature and my own thoughts. I had never experienced it in higher measures than at this moment. Could I, by a volition, have arrested the flight of time and the succession of sensations, here would I have fixed the *punctum stans* of existence, and been content to have this scene always around me, and the enjoyment of this union of meditation and repose, perpetual.

But a change came over my thoughts, as I read the quaint axiom, laid down with such mathematical precision, *man is formed to be happy*. What I saw and what I felt, my own consciousness assented to the proposition. But, startled by a transient feeling of pain, a new train of ideas succeeded. I have only to pass, said I, the short interval between this repose, verdure, quietness and internal satisfaction, to reach the scene of dust and smoke before me. Besides spires and mansions, I shall see hovels, poor, blind, lame, squalid, blaspheming youth, imbecile age, prostitutes, beggars, haunts of felons and outlaws; and even in the abodes of what shows external comfort and opulence, the sick and dying hanging

in agonies of suspense upon the countenance of their physician and friends, as they catch gleams of hope or shades of despair from their aspect. Many of these sick, even if they recover, will only be restored to trembling age, to perpetual and incurable infirmity, and to evils worse than death. Yet, unhappy in living, and afraid to die, they cling to this wretched existence as though it were the highest boon. These varied shades of misery that the picture before me will present to the slightest inspection, in ten thousand forms and combinations, are visible in every part of our world. I, too, shall soon add to the deepness of the shading. My friends will depart in succession; and in my turn, on the bed of death, I shall look in the faces of those most dear to me, as I am compelled to depart out of life. What an affecting contrast with what I see and what I am!

Why there is this partial evil in the world is not a question which I shall here attempt to vex; for I could add nothing to what has already been said upon the subject. It is enough that the evil does actually exist. Is it remediless? Can life be so spent as to leave a balance of enjoyment set over against the evil? These are my questions. There will always be inequality, ignorance, vice, disease, a measureless amount of misery and death. What portion of the evils of life can be cured? What portion must be manfully, piously endured? What transient gleams of joy can be made to illumine the depth of shade?

I yield entire faith to the doctrine before you, that, estimate these evils as highly as you may, a balance of enjoyment may still be struck in favor of life. I do not doubt, that more than one half the suffering and sorrow which every individual endures is simply of his own procuring, and not only that it might have been wholly avoided, but that positive enjoyment might have been substituted in its place. An inconceivable mass of misery would at once be struck from the sum if, as I have already remarked, we knew the physical, organic and moral laws of our being, and conformed

ourselves to them. A uniform, consistent and thorough education would cure us of innumerable errors of opinion, injurious habits, and a servile conformity to established and prescribed prejudices, and would impart to us wisdom, force of character and resignation, to enable us to sustain, as we ought, those that are unavoidable. Imperfection, pain, decay and death, in the inevitable measures belonging to organized beings, would remain. The dignity of true philosophy, the stern consciousness of the necessity of courage, profound and filial submission to the divine will, and the well defined and investigated hopes of religion would accomplish the remainder.

Consider one single evil — fear, unnecessary fear, an entirely gratuitous infusion of bitterness in the cup of life. I ask the man who has seen fourscore winters to tell me, were all that he has suffered in his pilgrimage cast into one account, what would be the greatest item in the sum? I believe that almost every one might answer, that more than half might be charged to one single source of suffering — fear — fear of opinion, reproach, shame, poverty, pain, danger, disease and death. I pause not to consider the usual dull illustrations of the wisdom and utility of assigning to us the instinct of fear, to put us on our guard and to enable us to ward off evils. It is not this instinctive shrinking and vigilance to avoid evil that I consider. Let education have its most perfect work in raising us superior to this servile and tormenting passion, and too much of it would still remain. Of all that we have suffered from fear, what portion has been of any service in shielding us from that which we apprehended? Not only have we avoided no evil in consequence, but the enervating indulgence of this passion has taken from us our quickness of foresight, our coolness of deliberation, our firmness of action and resolve, by the exercise of which, we might have escaped all that we dreaded. We may calculate then, that every pang we have felt from this source has been just so much

gratuitous agony.

Not only natural instincts, but acquired habits are transmitted; and this evil of fearfulness, this foreboding of apprehension, shaping the fashion of uncertain ills, has been the growing inheritance of countless generations; and a shrinking and effeminate timidity has been woven into our mental constitution by nature. Education, instead of resisting, or counteracting, or diminishing the transmitted mischief, has labored with terrible effect, to make it a principle and a motive to action, and the most efficient engine of the inculcated systems of morality and religion. Fear of death, and a slavish terror, springing from misapprehensions of the character of the divine being, and unmanly and debilitating horrors in regard to the unknown future in another life, these have been the chief sources of this evil. Terribly have the father and the mother, the minister and the school-master, and general prescription and example concurred, to strengthen this barbarous instrument of governing, which never inspired a good action, and which it would be cruel to apply to a slave. Horrible have been the bondage, the mean abjectness of spirit, the long agony of the soul, which this inculcation has inspired. — We have been sedulously trained in a course of discipline which has made us afraid of our own shadows in the dark, and inspired us with shrinking and terror in view of a silent and peaceful corpse, which, in the eye of sober reason, should originate associations no more fearful, than a waxen figure. We, who are the victims of this inborn and instinctive inheritance, we, who have had it inwoven by precept, education and example, and the prevalent impression, that it is one of the purest and most religious motives of action, are best able from our own consciousness, and the memory of what we have suffered from it, to present just views of it to others. — It may be in us an ingrafted principle, too deep to be uprooted by any rules, or reasons, or

wisdom of the Creator concur to prove the assertion. Yet the earth resounds with the complaints of the unhappy, although they are encompassed with the means of enjoyment, of which they appear to know neither the value nor the use. They resemble the shipwrecked mariner, on a desert isle, surrounded with fruits, of the flavors and properties of which he is ignorant, as he is doubtful whether they offer aliment or poison.

I was early impelled to investigate the character and motives of the crowd around me, eagerly rushing forward in pursuit of happiness. I soon noted multitudes

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system of discipline; a habit too unyieldingly become a part of our nature, to be overcome. But with minds more docile, with temperaments more pliant, with habits less fixed, it may be otherwise. The next generation may transmit a more manly and less timid nature to the generations to come. Education, building on the basis of minds of more force, may then accomplish its perfect work, imbuing them with a filial confidence in the Almighty, a sense of the beauty of well-doing, and a perfect fearlessness in regard to everything, but doing wrong. The happier generation of that era, will be spared the agony of all deaths, but the single one of nature; and will be fortified by discipline, and the force of general opinion and example, to regard this inevitable law of our being, this merciful provision of providence, this rest for the worn and weary, as the hireling regards the evening shade, when he reposes from his labors and receives his reward. I shall elsewhere advert to this evil in more detail, and point out such remedies, as appear to me to be suggested by reason, education and religion.

relinquishing the chase in indolent despondency. They affirmed to me that they no longer believed in the existence of happiness. I felt an insatiate craving, and saw life through the illusive coloring of youth. Unwilling to resign my hopes, I inquired of others, who seemed possessed of greater strength of mind, and more weight of character, if they could guide me to the place of happiness? Some answered with an ill-concealed smile of derision, and others with bitterness. They declared that in their view the pleasures of life were more than counterbalanced by its pains. Because they were disappointed and discouraged, they deemed that their superior wisdom had enabled them to strip off the disguises of life, and contemplate it with sullen resignation.

I remarked others in high places, whose restless activity and brilliance dazzled the multitude and inspired envy. I eagerly asked of them the secret of happiness. Too proud and self-satisfied to dissemble, they made little effort to conceal their principles. I saw their hearts contracted by the vileness of egotism, and devoured with measureless ambition. A faithful scrutiny, which penetrated beyond their dazzling exterior, showed me the righteous reaction of their principles, and convinced me that they suffered according to their deserts.

Weary and disheartened, I left them, and repaired to the class of stern and austere moralists. They

represented the world to me as a melancholy and mysterious valley, through which the sojourner passes, groaning on his way to the grave. Their doctrines inspired me at once with sadness and terror. I soon resumed the elastic confidence of youth, and replied, 'I will never believe that the Author of my being, who has imaged in my heart such pure and tranquil pleasures, who has rendered man capable of chaste love, and of friendship in its sanctity, who has formed us innocent before we could practise virtue, and who has connected the salutary bitterness of repentance with errors, has unalterably willed our misery.'

Thence I passed to the opposite extreme, and accosted a gay and reckless throng, whose deportment showed that they had found the object of my pursuit. I discovered them to be fickle by character, and vacillating from indifference. They had only escaped the errors of the moralists, by substituting, in place of their austere maxims, enjoyments without any regard to consequences. I asked them to point me to happiness. Without comprehending the import of my question, they offered me participation in their pleasures. But I saw them prodigal of life, dissipating years in a few days, and reserving the remnant of their existence for unavailing repentance.[4]

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[4] This classification of the great divisions of our species, as they are occupied in the pursuit of happiness, seems to me to unite

truth with poetry and philosophy, and to be both happy and just. The disappointed, who affirm that the earth offers no happiness, the gloomy, who view life as a place of penance, austerity and tears, the dissipated and voluptuous, who seek only pleasure, and whose doctrine is, that life offers no happiness but in unbridled indulgence, the ambitious, who consider happiness to consist only in wealth, power and distinction, and a very numerous class, who have no object in view, but to vegetate through life by chance, constitute the great mass of mankind. The number of those who have lived by system, and disciplined themselves to the wise and calculating pursuit of happiness, has always been small. But there have still been some, enough to prove the practicability of the art. — Wherever we find a person, who declares that he has lived happily, if his enjoyments have been of a higher kind, than the mere vegetative easiness of a felicitous temperament and an unthinking joyousness, we shall find on inquiry, that he has been a philosopher in the highest and best sense. He may scarcely understand the import of the term; but, however ignorant of systems, and the learning of the schools, if he have made it his chief business, to learn by the study of himself, and general observation, how to be happy, he is the true sage. He may well be content, let others regard him as they may; for he has put in requisition the best wisdom of life. No one maxim, especially, ever included more important and practical truth, than that, to be happy, we must assiduously train ourselves to retain through life a keen and juvenile freshness of sensibility to enjoyment, and must early learn to anticipate the effect of experience and years in cultivating a stern indifference, a strong spirit of endurance, and unshrinking obtuseness to pain. It has been my fortune to see examples of persons who enjoyed life even to old age with all the ardor and the quick perception of the young, and who had always been as remarkable for their impassive and heroic endurance of pain.

In view of so many observations, I abandoned the idea of guiding my researches by the counsels of others; and began to inquire for the secret in my own bosom. I heard the multitude around me complaining, in disappointment and discouragement. I resolved, that I would not commence the pursuit of happiness by servilely following in their beaten path. I determined to reflect, and patiently investigate a subject of so much moment. I detected at once the error of the common impression, that pleasure and happiness are the same. The former, fickle and fleeting, assumes forms as various as human caprice; and its most attractive charm is novelty. The object which gives it birth today, ceases to please, or inspires disgust tomorrow. The perception of happiness is not thus changeable and transient. It creates the consciousness of an existence so tranquil and satisfying, that the longer we experience it, the more we desire to prolong its duration.

Another mistaken, though common impression is, that the more profoundly we reflect, and make the pursuit of happiness a study, the less we shall be likely to enjoy. This is an error not only in regard to happiness, but even pleasure. If it be innocent and exempt from danger, to analyze it, and reason upon it, so far from diminishing, prolongs the delight, and renders it higher. Without reflection we only skim its surface; we do not penetrate, and enjoy it.

Let us observe the few, who have acquired the

wisdom to enjoy that existence, which the multitude waste. In their festal unions of friendship, let us mark the development of their desire to multiply the happy moments of life. By what ingenious and pleasant discussions do they heighten the charms of their condition! With what delicacy of tact do they analyze their enjoyments, to taste them with a more prolonged and exquisite relish! With what skill do they discipline themselves sometimes to efface the images of the future, that nothing may embitter, or distract their relish of the present; and sometimes to invoke remembrances and hopes, to impart to it still brighter embellishments!

Contrary to the prevalent impression, I therefore deem that, to reflect much upon it, is one of the wisest means in the pursuit of happiness. The first analysis of reflection, it is true, dispels the charm with which youth invests existence. It forces the conviction upon us, that the pleasures of life are less durable, and its forms more numerous and prolonged, than we had anticipated. The first result of the process is discouragement. But, as we continue to reflect, objects change their aspect a second time. The evils which at the first glance seemed so formidable, lose a portion of their terrific semblance; and the fleeting pleasures of existence receive new attractions from their analogy to human weakness.

They mistake, too, who suppose that the art on which I write has never been taught. The sages of Greece investigated the science of happiness as

eloquently and profoundly, as they studied the other sciences. They wisely held the latter in estimation only so far as they were subservient to the former. In all succeeding ages there have arisen a few thinking men, who have regarded all their faculties, their advantages of nature and fortune, their studies and acquirements, not as ends in themselves, but as means conducive to the right pursuit of happiness.

So long a period has elapsed since this has been a subject of investigation, that when the opinion is advanced that this pursuit may be successfully conducted by system, its rules reduced to an art, and thus become assimilated to those of the other arts, most men are utterly incredulous.[5] No truth, however, is

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[5] We are told, in ridicule of this study, that men have been very happy without rules, and before any system had been laid down, and will continue to be happy, unconscious of the means by which they arrived at their enjoyment. So have men reasoned without acquaintance with the rules of logic; but this proves not the inutility of the study. Let the objector convince us that the happy without thought and rules would not have been happier if they had sought enjoyment with the keen and practical intelligence of a Franklin.

Whatever men do well without definite aim and without rules, it is clear to me, they would do better with these advantages. The same argument equally militates with all means of moral instruction. 'The world,' the objector may say, 'will proceed as before, say what we may.' But this would be deemed no just ground of objection to an attempt to improve the age, though the

more simple. To attain to a knowledge of the rules, it is only requisite, as in the other arts, that there should be natural dispositions for the study, favorable circumstances, and an assiduous investigation of the precepts.

The influence of fortunate dispositions for this study is chiefly discernible in men of marked and energetic character. Some are endowed by nature with such firmness and force of character, that misfortune cannot shake them. It slides, if I may so speak, over the surface of their stoical hearts, and the shock of adversity inspires them almost with a sort of pleasure, calling forth the conscious feeling of power and independence for resistance. But we observe the greater number shrinking from affliction, and even images of sadness, enjoying the present without apparent consciousness, and forgetting the past without regret. Always fickle and frivolous, they evade suffering by recklessness and gayety. The most perfect organization for happiness[6] imparts at the same time great force to

efforts may have little visible and apparent effect.

[6] No term has been more hackneyed, in these days, than education. We have had system upon system, and treatise upon treatise; and more has been written and declaimed upon this subject than almost any other. And yet, scarcely a word has been said upon a grand and radical defect in all existing systems which reduces to a very humble scale the results of the best concerted efforts. I lay out of the question all other incongruities, that I might

easily mention, and come directly to that which I have chiefly in my mind. Each of the different instructors, through whose forming hands the pupil passes, communicates to him different, militant and incompatible impulses; so that, instead of a continuous operation and an onward movement, it seems to be the work of each successive teacher to undo that of all the others. The father and mother, besides various minor inculcations, labor, as their highest object, to infuse into the mind of their child, ambition, the desire of preeminence and distinction. The school-master instils the same principles under such different circumstances as to render the envy, rivalry and competition of the school-room almost another series of impulses. The minister and the catechism enjoin humility, meekness and a disposition to prefer others in honor before themselves. 'Be honest and high-minded,' say the parents and teachers. 'Be adroit, and circumvent those who are watching to take advantage of your weakness and inexperience,' says the master at the counting-desk. The elder friends teach one class of maxims, and the younger another. The actual world inculcates rules different from all the rest. Thus the parents, the school-master, the minister, the politician, society and the world are continually varying the direction of the youthful traveller. No wonder that most people either have no character, or one that is a compound of the most incongruous elements. A pupil, to have a strong, wise, marked and efficient character, should have had it steadily trained to one end; and every impulse ought to have been in a right line and concurrent with every other. Such must be the case before honest and uniform characters will be formed.

There is little force in the objection, that he who has not been constantly happy himself ought not to presume to teach others to be happy. On the contrary, as the author beautifully suggests, none can discuss, with so much experience and force of truth, the dangers of shipwreck, as they who have themselves suffered it. If

resist the pains of life, and keen sensibility to enjoy its pleasures. I am aware that great energy and quick sensibility are generally supposed to be incompatible qualities; I have, nevertheless, often seen them united. I would lay down precepts, by which to obtain the combination. By a more perfect education, it is hoped that, in the ages to come, this union may become general.

Perhaps some will ask, if he who thus assumes to teach the art of happiness has himself learned to be constantly happy? Endowed with a moderate share of philosophy, and aided by favorable circumstances, I have thus far found the pleasures of life greatly overbalancing its pains. But who can hope felicity without alloy? I would not conceal that I have had my share of inquietudes and regrets; and I have sometimes forgotten my principles. I resemble the pilot, who gives lessons upon his art after more than one shipwreck.

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the art of happiness can be taught, the teacher must necessarily have paid the price of a qualification to impart it, in having been himself unhappy. Conscious that he had the susceptibility of enjoyment, and wanted only the right direction of the means, he will be able to set up way-marks, as a warning to others, at the points where he remembers that he went astray himself.

Letter V. OUR DESIRES

Whence are our most common sufferings? From desires which surpass our ability to satisfy them. The ancients relate, that Oromazes appeared to Usbeck, the virtuous, and said, ‘form a wish, and I will grant it.’ ‘Source of light,’ replied the sage, ‘I only wish to limit my desires by those things, which nature has rendered indispensable.’[7]

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[7] The necessity of moderating our desires and reducing them within the limits of what we may reasonably hope to acquire, has been the beaten theme of prose and song for so many ages that the triteness of repetition has finally caused the great truth to be almost disregarded by moralists. Yet, who can calculate the sum of torment that has been inflicted by wild and unreasonable desires, by visionary and puerile expectations, beyond all probable bounds of means to realize them, indulged and fostered until they have acquired the force of habit! Whose memory cannot recur to sufferings from envy and ill will, generated by cupidity, for the possessions and advantages of others that we have not! Who can count the pangs which he has endured from extravagant and unattainable wishes! Poetry calls our mortal sojourn a vale of tears; yet what ingenuity to multiply the gratuitous means of self-torment! Has another health, wealth, beauty, fortune, endowment, which I have not? Envy will neither take them from him, nor transfer them to me. Why, then, should I allow vultures to prey upon my spirit? Learn neither to regret what you want and cannot supply, nor to hate him who is more fortunate. With all his apparent advantages over you, he wants, perhaps, what you may possess, a tranquil mind. There is little doubt that you are the

Let us not suppose, however, that a negative happiness, a condition exempt from suffering, is the most fortunate condition to which we may aspire. They who contend for this gloomy system, have but poorly studied the nature of man. If he errs in desiring positive enjoyments, if his highest aim ought to be, to live free from pain, the caves of the forest conceal those happy beings whom we ought to choose for our models.

Bounded by the present, animals sleep, eat,

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happier person if you contemplate his advantages and his possessions with a cheerful and unrepining spirit.

I present two considerations only, as inducements to control and regulate your desires. 1. In indulging them beyond reason you are fostering internal enemies and becoming a self-tormentor. In the quaint language of the ancient divines, they are like fire, good servants but terrible masters. 2d. The higher gifts of fortune, the common objects of envious desire, are awarded to but a few. The number of those who may entertain any reasonable hope of reaching them is very small. But every one can moderate his desires. Every one can set bounds to his ambition. Every one can limit his expectations. What influence can fortune, events, or power exercise over a person, who has learned to be content with a little, and who has acquired courage to resign even that without repining? Franklin might well smile at the impotent malice of those who would deprive him of his means and his business, when he proved to them that he could live on turnips and rain water. It is not the less true or important, because it has been a million times said, that happiness, the creature of the mind, dwells not in external things.

procreate, live without inquietude, and die without regret: and this is the perfection of negative happiness. Man, it is true, loses himself in vain projects. His long remembrances, his keen foresight create him suffering in the past and the future. His imagination brings forth errors, his liberty, crimes. But the abuse of his faculties does not disprove their excellence. Let him consecrate to directing them aright, that time which he has hitherto lost in mourning over their aberrations, and he will have reason to be grateful to the Creator, for having given him the most exalted rank among sublunary beings. If, on the other hand, he chooses to abandon that rank, of which he ought to be proud, he will degrade his immortal nature at his own cost; and will only add to his other evils the shame of wishing to render himself vile.

Let us examine those animals, the instincts of which have the nearest relation to intelligence. Not one of them takes possession of the paternal heritage, increases it, and transmits it to posterity. Man alone does this, improves his condition and his kind, and in this is essentially distinct from all other beings below. From the Eternal to him, and from him to animals the chain is twice broken.

For man, the absence of suffering and a negative happiness are not sufficient. His noble faculties refuse the repose of indifference. Created to aspire to whatever may be an element of enjoyment, let him

cherish his desires, and let them indicate to him the path of happiness; too fortunate, if they do not entice him towards objects, which retire in proportion as he struggles to attain them, and towards those imaginary joys, of which the deceitful possession is more fertile in regrets than in pleasures.

Far from being the austere censor of desires, I admit, that they often produce charming illusions. What loveliness have they not spread over our spring of life! Our imagination at that time, as brilliant and as vivid as our age, embellished the whole universe, and every position in which our lot might one day place us. We were occupied with errors; but they were happy errors; and to desire was to enjoy.

Those enchanting dreams, which hold such a delightful place in the life of every man, whose imagination is gay and creative, spring from our desires. Ingenious fictions! Prolific visions! While ye cradle us, we possess the object of our magic reveries. Real possession may be less fugitive. But may it not also vanish like a dream?

Doubtless there are dangers blended with these seductive imaginings. In leaving the region of illusion, the greater part of men look with regret upon the abodes of reality, in which they must henceforward dwell. Let us not share their gloomy weakness. Let us learn to enjoy the moments of error, and perpetuate and renew them by remembrance. Children, only, are

allowed to weep, when the waking moment dispels the toys, of which a dream had given them possession.

We give ourselves up to illusions without danger, if we have formed our reason; if we wisely think that the situation where our lot has placed us may have advantages which no other could offer. Imagination embellishes some hours without troubling any. Prompt to yield to the delightful visions, there are few of which I have not contemplated the charm. In seeing them vanish like a fleeting dream, I look round on my wife and children, and believe that I am remembered by a few friends. I open my heart to the pleasures of my retreat, which, though simple, are ever new. As the gilded creations of imagination disappear, I smile at my creative occupation, and console myself with the consciousness, that fancy can paint nothing brighter or more satisfying, than these my realities.[8]

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[8] Wherever civilized man has been found, the first effort of his mind, beyond the attainment of his animal wants, has been to travel into the regions of imagination, to create a nobler and more beautiful world than the dull and common-place existing one, to assign to man a higher character and purer motives than belong to the actual race. To possess a frame inaccessible to pain and decay, and to dwell in eternal spring, surrounded by beauty and truth, is an instinctive desire. A mind of any fertility can create and arrange such a scene; and in this dreaming occupation the sensations are tranquillizing and pleasant beyond the more exciting enjoyment of actual fruition. With the author, I deem the propensity for this sort

of meditation neither unworthy in itself, nor tending to consequences to be deprecated. So far as my own experience goes, and I am not without my share, it neither enervates nor satiates. It furnishes enjoyment that is calm and soothing; and such enjoyment, instead of enfeebling, invigorates the mind to sustain trials and sorrows. Why should we not enter into every enjoyment that is followed by no painful consequences? Why should we not be happy when we may? Is he not innocently employed who is imagining a fairer scene — a better world — more benevolence, and more joy than this 'visible diurnal sphere' affords? Addison is never presented to me in a light so amiable as when he relates his day-dreams, his universal empire, in which he puts down all folly and all wickedness, and makes all his personages good and happy. Every writer who has produced a romance worth reading, has been endowed in this way, as a matter of course; and I confidently believe that the greatest and best of men have been most strongly inclined to this sort of mental creation. May not their noblest achievements have been the patterns of those archetypes? I have no doubt that imaginings infinitely more interesting than any recorded in romances, Arabian tales, or any other work of fiction, have imparted their transient exhilaration to meditative minds, and have passed away with the things that never grew into the material and concrete grossness of sensible existence. If ink and paper and printing could have been created as cheaply and readily as a new earth and better men and women, and scenes more like what we hope for at last, the world would have had bequeathed to it more volumes, than would have weighed down all the ponderous dulness of by-gone romance. I cannot assure myself, that you would have been amused, or instructed in reading; but you would then have been able to form some idea of the hours of pain, embarrassment, lack of all external means of pleasant occupation, journeying, cold and watching, that have been beguiled by this

But let me hasten to make an important distinction, to prevent the semblance of contradiction. Let me discriminate those fleeting desires, which amuse, or delude us for a moment, from those deep cravings, which, directing all our faculties towards a given end, necessarily exercise a strong influence upon life. It is time to contemplate the latter, and to suggest more grave reflections. While the scope of our faculties is limited to narrow bounds, our desires run out into infinity. From this fact result two reflections — the one afflicting, that the multitude are miserable, because it is easier to form, than to obtain our wishes; the other consoling, that they might be happy, since every one can regulate his desires.

Reduced to the necessity to realize, or restrain them, which course does wisdom indicate? Will ambition conduct us to repose?[9] He who chases its

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employment. I only add that, so far as my experience extends, the first calm days of spring, and the period of Indian summer in autumn are most propitious to this sort of revery.

[9] These and the subsequent views of ambition in this essay of M. Droz, have been the theme of severe and sweeping strictures upon the general tendency of his book. Ambitious and aspiring men will find it ridiculous, of course, to exact, as a pre-requisite to the pursuit of happiness, the abandonment, or the moderation of ambitious thoughts, especially in such a country as ours, where some boon is held out to tempt these aspirings in almost every condition, from the mansion to the cabin. It may not be amiss for

men, who are themselves aspirants, and to whom the access to distinction and power is easy, and the attainment probable, to declaim against the tendency of these maxims. I know well, that in every rank and position, the inculcation of aspiring thoughts, emulation and rivalry is the first and last lesson, the grand and beaten precept, upon which the million are acting. I am well aware how many hearts are wrung by all the fierce and tormenting passions, associated with this devouring one. I affirm nothing in regard to my own interior views, respecting what the world calls fame, glory and immortality. Those who are most dear to me, will not understand me to be entering my *caveat* to dissuade them from this *last infirmity of noble minds*. Could I do it with more eloquence than ever yet flowed from tongue or pen, there will always be a hundred envious competitors for every single niche in the temple of fame. It can be occupied but by one; and he who gains it will exult in his elevation only during its freshness and novelty. The rest, to the torment of fostered and devouring desires, will add the bitterness of disappointment.

Since it is a fact out of question, that the greater portion of the species can never secure the objects of their ambition, is it ill-judged in one who treats upon the science of happiness, to write for the million instead of the few favorites of fortune? The principles of a philosophic investigation ought not to be narrowed down to meet the wishes of the few. The question is, whether, taking into view ambition and all the associated feelings, the toil of pursuit, and the difficulty and unfrequency of the attainment of its objects, it is, on the whole, favorable to happiness to cherish the passion, or not? I am clear, that even the successful aspirants, if their rivalry were more generous and philanthropic, and their indulgence of the cankering and corroding of ill-concealed envy, derision, hate and scorn, were regulated, would be not the less rapid in reaching the goal, or happy in the fruition of their

attainment. I have little doubt, if an exact balance of enjoyment and suffering could be struck, at the last hour between two persons, whose circumstances in other respects had been similar, one of whom had been distinguished in place and power, in consequence of cultivating ambition; and the other obscure in peaceful privacy, in consequence of having chosen that condition, that the scale of happiness would decidedly incline in favor of the latter. In a word, it is the index of sound calculation, to prepare for the fate of the million, rather than that of the few. Repress ambition, as much as we may, there will always remain enough to render the world an aceldama, and the human heart a place of concentrated torment.

It is clear, therefore, to me, that in making up the debt and credit account of life, in relation to happiness, most of the sentiments associated with ambition, and its prolific family of self-tormenting passions, may be set down as gratuitous items of misery, superinduced by our own voluntary discipline. I shall be asked, what is to stimulate to exertion, to study, toil and sacrifice, to great and noble actions, and what shall lead to fame and renown, if this incentive be taken away? I answer, that, what is ordinarily dignified with the appellation of ambition, is a vile mixture of the worst feelings of our nature. There is in all minds, truly noble, a sufficient impulse towards great actions, apart from these movements, which are generally the excitements of little and mean spirits. Take the whole nature of man into the calculation, and there can never be a want of sufficient impulse towards distinction, without a particle of those contemptible motives, which are generally put to the account of praiseworthy incitement. Truly great men have been remarkable for their exemption from envy, the inseparable concomitant of conscious deficiency; and for a certain calm and tranquil spirit, indicating moderation and comparative indifference in the struggle of emulation. They are

able to say, in regard to the highest boon of ambition,

> ‘I neither spurn, nor for the favor call,
> It comes unasked-for, if it comes at all.’

Why, then, in a world, and in an order of society, where ambition, with its associated passions, brings in an enormous amount to the mass of human self-inflicted torment, should he be censured, who advises, that in the philosophic and calculating pursuit of happiness, this element of misery should be, as much as possible, repressed? The question may be more strongly urged, when we take into the account, the consideration, that the far greater portion of the species must calculate on the bitterness of disappointment, in addition to the miseries which are inseparable from the indulgence of this passion. All the inordinate thirst for power and fame of the countless aspirants, who desire to be Alexanders, C?sars and Napoleons, not only is so much subtracted from their enjoyment, and added to their misery, but has little tendency to aid them to attainments, which, after all, are as frequently the award of contingency, as of calculation.

Let the evils of retirement and obscurity, be fairly balanced with those of gratified ambition, and let the aspirant feel, that they are absolutely incompatible, the one with the other. — Let him then make his election, in view of the consequences, and not foolishly expect that he can unite incompatible advantages. If he chooses the dust and scramble of the arena, and the intoxicating pleasures at the goal, let him not repine, that he cannot unite with them those of repose, retirement and a tranquil mind. If, on the contrary, he prefers to hold on the noiseless tenor of his way, in peace and privacy, let not the serpents of envy sting him, when he sees the car of the fortunate aspirant drawn forward by the applauding million. Let not murmurs arise in his heart, when he hears, or reads

phantoms, resembles the child who imagines that he shall be able to grasp the rainbow, which spans the mountain in the distance. But from mountain to mountain, a new horizon spreads before his eyes. But the courage and perseverance requisite to regulate our desires, may intimidate us. We vex ourselves in the pursuit of fortune, honor and glory. Philosophy is worth more than the whole, and do we expect to purchase it without pain? True, she declares to us, that to realize our desires is a part of the science of happiness; but by no means the most important one. Yet it is the only one to which most men devote themselves. Philosophy should teach us, what desires we ought to receive and cherish, as inmates. When they are fleeting and spring from a gay and creative imagination, let us yield ourselves without fear to their transient dreams. But when they may exercise a long and decisive influence, let a mature examination teach us, whether wisdom

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of the rewards, honors and immortality of those whom he may believe to be endowed no higher than himself with talents or virtues. Let him say, 'no one can show me the mind, or paint me the consciousness of that man. Fortune and my own choice have assigned me the shade. Let me not embitter its coolness and its satisfactions, by idle desires to unite advantages, that are, in their nature, incongruous. Let me remember, that mine is the condition of the million. My Creator cannot have doomed so vast a proportion of his creatures to a state, which is necessarily miserable. All that remains to me, is to make the best of the common lot.'

allows the attempt to realize them. Oh! how much uncertainty and torment we might spare our weakness, if from infancy we directed our pursuit towards the essential objects of felicity, and if we stripped those, which, in their issue, produce chimerical hopes and bitter regrets, of their deceitful charms! What gratitude should we not owe that provident instruction, whose cares should indicate, and smooth our road to happiness! The great results, which might be obtained from education, would be, to moderate the desires, and to find some indemnities for the sorrows of life. On the present plan, by arousing our emulation, by enkindling our instinctive ardor to increase our fortune, and eclipse our rivals, we make it a study, if I may so say, to render ourselves discontented with our destiny; and, as if afraid that we should not be sufficiently perverted by the contagion of example, we invoke ambition and cupidity to enter the soul. We treat as chimerical those desires, which are so simple and pure, as to be pleasures of themselves, and which look to a happiness easy of attainment.

Let us, then, unlearn most of the ideas we have received. Let us close our eyes on the illusions which surround us. Let us remould our plan of life, and retain in the heart only those desires which nature has placed there. Let reflection impart energy to our mind, and be our guide in the new path which reason opens before us.