

THE NATURE OF TRUE HAPPINESS

When we cast a retrospective glance over the numerous topics of moral instruction and useful investigation, which have met the attention of learned men in every age and every country, we will probably find that there has been no subject more considered or on which more has been written than that of earthly happiness. The consideration of it is interesting to all, because all think themselves equally entitled to be partakers of it. The man of the world, the man of pleasure, the man of letters, all pursue their various occupations with the same end in view; in the journey of life, though each one takes a different path, all hope to arrive at the same point. But where shall we find the origin of true happiness? The origin of true happiness can be sought only in an internal cause, that is, it must be wholly influenced by the affections of the mind. It remains then to be considered, in what state and under what circumstances the mind can attain a real happiness. In the first place,

“Nemo malus felix.”

This may be considered as an invariable rule. Where there is an evil conscience, tranquility cannot exist; for, however long habit may have familiarized a man's mind to wickedness, that inward monitor must still exist. Impiety, then, may be regarded as incompatible with a happy state of mind.

Various are the conjectures that men have made concerning the attainment of that happy state, but too often they have erred in their own peculiarities, and laid down rules for general adoption, which have been made to accommodate the particular formation of their own minds. Some, whom disappointments have soured into an aversion for the world, have placed the perfection of bliss in the seclusion of a hermit; Cowley would have banished us to the new world, for he erected his paradise among the wilds of North America. How false is this ideal! Are we not formed for one another, and is it not reasonable to conclude that “the Universal Cause” has made,

“What happiness we justly call
Subsist not in the good of one, but all?”

Paley has made one essential cause of happiness "the exercise of social affections," and, indeed, every day's experience tells that society may be made a principal source of the pleasures and comforts of life.

Human wisdom, also, has been held up as the sole source of happiness, but would it be just that that, to which all have an equal right, should be confined to the reach of only a few, whom nature has endowed with a superior intellect?

Contentment has been marked out as the goal to which all in search of true happiness should hasten.

"Quod sis, esse velis, nihilque malis,"

is a precept many have inculcated and with great truth; but, still there is a manifest misconception of the real cause. Let us consider a wretch who, having waded through deceit and blood, has arrived at the highest pinnacle of his ambition; every momentary wish is gratified; his will is scarcely formed before it is executed, and his savage mind is perfectly contented by the realization of his most sanguine desires. Are we to suppose this being happy? Surely not—it is not the possession of all we desire; neither is it the listless enjoyment of flocks, or fields, or groves, or murmuring streams, that can alone confer on man a sound and lasting happiness.

"Not e'en all these in one rich lot combined,
That can make the happy man without the mind."

The fact, then, is that content is alone the source of happiness which arises from tranquility of mind—that tranquility of mind alone arises from a purity of conscience and that purity of conscience can alone be sought for in virtue.

What, therefore, can be more reasonable than to suppose that in perfect virtue alone can we look for perfect happiness? This conclusion is borne out by the testimony of the wisest philosophers, ancient and modern; all agree that virtue is a gem unequalled in value. It is the source of wealth like the philosopher's stone, and, when a man has once put himself in possession of it, he may look down with indifference on the mightiest monarch on earth.

May we not believe in that which is founded on reason? May we not confide in that which has received

the sanction of wisdom and experience? Let us, then, receive as immutable the golden assertion of a famous moral poet, conveyed in the following memorable lines.

then

“ Know this truth—enough for man to know
Virtue alone is happiness below.”

F.L. '30



MES CANTONS DE L'EST

Quand tout reneît à l'espérance
Et que l'hiver fuit loin de nous,
Dans le pays de notre enfance
Quand le soleil revient plus dous,
Quand l'hirondelle est de retour,
Je vous reviens avec ivresse,
Mes doux Cantons, que je caresse,
Riant pays qui m'as donne le jour.

Il est un âge de la vie
Où chaque rêve doit finir;
Un âge ou l'âme recueillie
A besoin de se souvenir.
Et je me dis: "Aucun séjour
Ne me vaudra pour ma vieillesse
Les beaux Cantons de ma jeunesse,
Le gai pays qui m'a donné le jour."

N.B. '30



Music resembles poetry: in each
Are nameless graces which no methods teach
And which a master-hand alone can reach.

—Pope

Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her.

—Wordsworth