

## THE UNDERSTANDING HEART

In all lands and in all climes, wherever the light of civilization exists, wherever man has established a home for himself, there you will find the understanding heart. What is it about, that "Home, Sweet Home," that has such a universal appeal? Why does the traveller in foreign lands dream of home and long to be back with his "ain folk?" Ah, yes! he knows that *they* understand him; they rejoice in his successes and grieve at his failures. They know his strength and his frailties, and when he has erred and wandered from the beaten path, they do not harshly condemn him, but "strengthen and sustain." From them he receives sympathy and encouragement; in them he can confide all his troubles; with them discuss all his plans, knowing that he will not be laughed at nor scorned.

Or he may have a friend with whom to share his joys and sorrows. How often we feel as if we must tell someone our worries, and then when we have finally imparted them, what a weight seems to have been lifted from our shoulders! We have performed a Herculean task in thus dispelling the gloom from our minds. How much brighter now shines the sun! How grateful we feel towards our friend for relieving us of so great a burden and yet without at all adding to his own. We may count ourselves fortunate in having such a friend. How rare they are! Among a large number of friends how few do we really trust so much as to make them sharers in our every care, and in our daily thought.

I remember when my father died people came to express their sympathy,—some, acquaintances of his; some, his intimate friends. One in particular, a clergyman and a great friend of my father's, said to my mother, "I know you do not wish to be loaded down with visitors at such a time as this, I shall not go in." Then after addressing to her a few words of cheer and consolation, shortly took his leave. He knew, he understood, he was the true gentleman. His kind spirit has since gone to join that "choir invisible," but we all remember him well and will cherish his memory, as we honor his name.

Yes! well may we reverence the understanding heart for it has played a great part in the drama of man's progress. The early Christian Missionaries, notably Augus-



tine and his co-workers, owed much of their success to their insight into human nature, to their realization that those Saxons could be led to give up their heathen gods only by an appeal to their reason, and to their finer instincts.

Why is it that Charles Dickens is one of the most beloved authors of the English Language? Because he understood human nature, its strengths, its foibles, its loves and its hates, its humor and its pathos. He loved to turn a covetous old sinner like Scrooge into a shining example of benevolence, and we love him for it. We all remember the story in our school readers of Jean Valjean and the Bishop. How we loved him for his warm hospitality to the poor convict! Ah, yes! the bishop knew the human heart, *he* understood.

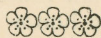
Again, it is this quality that has made some of the most successful men in public life. It made Lincoln beloved as "the man of the people;" it has enshrined the name of Sir Wilfred Laurier in the mind of every true Canadian no matter what his party, his race, or his religion.

How great is the understanding which Christ has for man! He knows man's temptations and trials. His patience is infinite. These are His words, "Come to Me all ye that labor and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you."

Oh, it is a great blessing, this understanding heart,—happy the man who has it! And how unfortunate those who are afflicted with the curse of human blindness. It is the understanding hearts who make this life worth living. This world is a much happier and brighter place because of them.

I believe that when the individuals of all nations shall have acquired the understanding heart *then*, and not till then, will we be granted universal Peace. Yes! that time is coming, and each day brings nearer,

"The brotherhood of man, the federation of the world."



A man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone.—*Thoreau*.