

THE EXILES' SONG.

I HAVE sat in chambers rich and high,
 When the haughtiest brow was smoothed in smiles,
 When kindness warmed proud Beauty's eye,
 And Art displayed its softest wiles;
 But the forest wild was my delight,
 At dawning gray and gathering night;
 More joy had I in my leafy hall,
 Than in fretted roof and storied wall.

I have knelt at the incense-shrine of Praise,
 When a thousand voices chanted deep,
 When the organ pealed, and the torches' blaze
 Saw some in triumph, some to weep;
 But higher rites have I partaken,
 When Heaven with the tempest's wing was shaken,
 When the forest blazed, and the lightning's dart
 Quailed all but the wandering exile's heart.

In climes of softer air I've been,
 And sat in bowers when the rose was blown,
 When the leaf was yet in its freshest green,
 And with one to love till then unknown;
 But deeper raptures I have felt,
 When by her rocky couch I knelt,
 Who crossed for me the stormy main,
 Content in one fond heart to reign.

A. M.

THE ELEMENTS OF A RELIGIOUS CHARACTER.

'BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM.'

WHAT are the elements and traits of a religious character? What combinations of virtue and excellence, of principle and attainment, enter into and form a character which answers to our conception of religion? We think we can recognize and judge of such a character when it appears before us as the result of a process, and therefore our first thought is, that it would be easy to describe such a character. We know and can respect such a character when we see it, and therefore we might say it could not be difficult to tell how it is to be formed, and of what elements and traits it must be composed.

But indeed it is not easy to describe a religious character, nor to tell, on the moment, the combination and proportion of its virtues, nor to analyze its parts. It is not easy, because character is of itself a wonderful and a mysterious creation; its springs are hidden, its processes are secret, its foundation and development do not admit of close observation, and the power with which it impresses us is rather realized than understood. And then the religious elements of a character only increase the difficulty of exhibiting its construc-

tion and its power. And then again there has grown up such a difference of estimate, such a variance in opinion among men, as to what religion is, what it enjoins, what it allows, what it approves, that we may indeed number it among the acknowledged impossibilities, to portray the ideal of a religious character to the satisfaction of any large number of persons. What different models are held up for our imitation! As we trace back the burthened history of two thousand years, we perceive that very different traits have been insisted on, and various excellences required. Stress has been laid upon one or another virtue; illustrious homage has been offered in different generations to characters quite in contrast with each other. Indeed, the civilized world now reveres alike some departed worthies as joined in the communion of saints, who if on earth together would have mutually denied each other's claims to any measure of regard.

Call up from their graves the departed worthies of their own day, the robed and transfigured memorials of distant times; let the long line of the revered dead pass in imagination before you, and as they pass, read their titles. The difference between a smile and a tear, between martyrdom and a triumph, between a smile of joy and a pang of agony, between a feast and a fast, is not greater than the difference in model and standard of character in those whom we agree in calling religious men. The saint from the dreary caverns of Africa leads the line. His bones start from his attenuated skin; even the skin is worn away from his knees by frequent prayer; his body is wasted by fasting, watching, and scourging: he has been the companion of beasts, the prey of vermin; he has seen it may be for half a century no human face or form. There was the standard of a religious character for him, and for his age. Next in the line is the monk; renouncing what is good, and commanding what is wicked; possessing the virtues of a cloister, and the fancied holiness which has made itself necessary to supply the place of real holiness. And then the monk was accounted worthy. But with his well-kept vows, and the well-worn record of his prayers, the monk retires into shadow with the saint, and a saint of a different aspect fills the eye. He comes as a dignitary of the church, bowed down with gold and jewels; with armies at his command, and holiness for his title. His garments are suffused with the odor of incense; millions fall prostrate and do reverence even to his feet with a kiss. He is anointed in life, and canonized at death. He lived in a gorgeous palace, he sleeps in a costly shrine. But while the pilgrim is on his way to that shrine, another ideal of the religious character passes before the mind; and then there appears before the eye one who is called a pious and godly man. He is the Puritan of ancient days. He comes with sad and austere looks, yet with a kind and tender heart, only we do not see the heart, because he wishes to be known by the face, which his close-cut hair brings into full view. A laugh to him is mockery; luxury is but a feasting of the adversary of souls; amusement is impiety; outward ceremonial is blasphemy. The offices of religion in one perpetual round,

cases of conscience, large and little volumes of dry divinity, and rigid family government, are the sacrifices which he offers to God. He leaves his home that he may thus worship. He raises his psalm of deliverance in the wilderness, and at death he rests beside the roots of a forest-tree in a grave not without a memorial. And he was the religious character of his day. And as the shades of the departed fall back into mystery, we find ourselves surrounded by groups of the living, who arrange themselves under the different standards which they recognize for the religious character.

These standards might fitly be inscribed with the mottoes, 'Morality, Ordinances, Faith;' for from the one or the other of these titles come the different models for the religious character. Practical goodness, cheerful, kind and ready sympathy for the suffering, uprightness in dealing, blamelessness in example, these constitute the highest religious character for some. The observance of seasons or rites, the literal fulfilment of the terms of ordinances, is the great essential for the completeness of religious character to others. Then justification by faith, an embrace of doctrinal formularies, a fixed and constant and unresisting submission to a covenant which suspends mercy, is the standard for others. These are the prevailing standards of a religious character now. Of course, if they exist, they are in some quarters insisted upon, and the differences must constantly appear in the various estimates formed by religious persons. These diverse standards have likewise been chosen in the light of experience, of long experience, and in full view of all those ancient models which we have contemplated.

Now from this survey of the strange contrasts presented to us, as exhibiting the ideal of a religious character in different places and generations, and among us now, we might at first judge that there was in reality no true standard, but that it was all a matter of fancy, combined somewhat with the aspects and emergencies of society; that a religious character was no fixed, well-ascertained, and established existence. Yet, after all, this standard has been by no means so diverse as it would seem. For a deeper search proves to us, that the same qualities of heart have been seeking for expression by the most widely different manifestations. Change the skin and drop the body with its worn knees, its sordid or its golden robes, its rigid features, or its gay smiles, and the elements of Christian excellence, if they exist, will appear the same in all, divested of the local peculiarities of age and generation. Indeed, true Christian goodness, excellence of character, is like the water, the emblem of renewal and grace; water, as diffused over the earth, differing every where by elevation and clime. Here it is frozen into mountains of ice, there it issues as boiling vapor from the earth; it is scanty and brackish in the desert, profuse and clear in the green woods; here it is borne along in torrents; there it trickles in dancing rills; here it is buried in deep wells, there it oozes from full fountains; every where it is different, but every where it is water, and every where it is the element of life. Such

is goodness, true excellence of character every where, apart from the peculiarities of age and clime.

Now by all this we are helped in discerning the elements of a religious character. The common consent of men amounts to little more than an allowance that a religious character must be formed out of a common character by two processes; the one a process of denial, the other a process of culture. And this indeed is the key to our whole subject, the solution of the great question which we have proposed, as to the standard of a religious character. There is an element of denial, and an element of culture, in a religious character; that is, a human character is made religious by renouncing something, and by attaining something. A religious character is to be formed out of a common character with some new materials; it is to part with something of its earthly organization; something of passion, weakness, and low desire, and to endue itself with something of heavenly grace and essence; turned from darkness unto light, from the power of Satan unto God.

Self-denial and culture, renunciation and attainment, are the two great processes by which a religious character is to be formed, and which, when applied, decide its elements. Yet there is a work which precedes and accompanies these processes, and that work is discipline; discipline, the agency which forms a religious character. The first essential then in a religious character is, that it be the subject of discipline; of discipline varying in the intensity of its struggles; in the difficulty, the amount, the protraction of its efforts, according to the natural differences of individuals, but always discipline; self-knowledge and self-control, strong in its formed purpose, resolute in pursuing it. A religious character was never of spontaneous growth, nor acquired unconsciously. It is known to the heart through all its stages. It is based upon spiritual convictions; it crosses many natural wishes; it embraces prospects which lie beyond the grave. These are elements of thought, of action, of life, which never come by chance, or by mere good influences around an individual. They vary in degree and strength in individuals, but are conscious possessions to all who share them. Self-discipline is a work which summons all our faculties, purposes, knowledge, resolutions, and efforts; it has its weary hours; its seasons for starting anew with quickened strength and zeal.

The prominent feature of a religious character is, that it has been the subject of discipline; that it is itself the result of discipline; has been wrought upon, formed, and established by discipline. In such a character we expect that every element shall declare effort and principle. The man or the woman, called religious, must bear about them the proof that they are what they are, as the result of an intention. We expect to see in a religious character distinctions and differences which we do not look for in the common standard of character. Nor only this; we expect also that these differences should appear as the results of a good purpose well-endavored; a foundation, a life, a growth, consecrated by high intentions to the highest uses and for the highest aims. This is a

truth which cannot be too strongly urged or insisted upon. A religious character ought to strike every one as the result of conscious effort; a work begun and in progress; a diamond in the process of being polished in the only way in which it may be polished, by other diamonds. Discipline, visible in its intention and work, this is the first of all essentials. This discipline will be strongly marked by two processes, a process of self-denial, and a process of culture; of renunciation and attainment. Of the fruits of these processes a religious character must largely partake; yet it is scarcely possible to describe in particulars the entire operation as it appears in the result.

The long and almost uniform opinion of men is right in judging that a religious character should present evidence of self-denial and self-restraint; should have renounced something of pleasure and desire; should have mortified some affections, and wrestled with some infirmities. Of the measure of this denial, each honest conscience must judge for itself. The great end of it, the sole reason for its necessity in an individual character is, that the law of the spiritual life may be obeyed, by the right exercise of the highest faculties and aims of the human heart. All indulgence inconsistent with this consecration is sin, and must be restrained. Yet who can decide the measure of this indulgence or restraint for another? A large ecclesiastical body has lately decided that dancing is inconsistent with a religious character. Whether this opinion is true or false, can be decided only by each individual for himself; by his own knowledge whether this or that amusement makes him frivolous and trifling, or whether it is only a momentary relaxation, enjoyed and then forgotten.

Now it is evident that the Almighty does not need nor require at our hands any self-denial or restraint of any kind, considered by itself, independently of its uses. Self-denial is of value only because of its influence on the character. So that we must ask ourselves what is the *reason* for self-denial in any given case, what is the *nature* of it, what the *degree* of it, what the *result* of it? Then shall we learn that in a religious character there has been a struggle between the lower and the higher nature, and that in all the parts and stages of that struggle, passion and sense have been denied; and denied for what? Not for a sour or morbid sanctimoniousness, but for the sake of a calm and meditative rest of the spirit, that unseen realities, and spiritual convictions, and noble purposes, and heavenly hopes, may have power over the character.

And as to the second process, of which a religious character is to show the visible results, the process of culture: this may appear in many traits, and graces, and actions, so as to distinguish a religious character from a common character. The elements of that culture are affections and duties, motives and convictions. The same strife between the higher and the lower nature which is begun in self-denial, is pursued in spiritual culture. The heart searcheth after the means of improvement and progress: and they are found near to us; in the lowly duties of common life, in the opportunities of a

day, in the necessity which our uniform experience presents, for acting from principle if we would act aright. Self-culture, in all its highest and most comprehensive processes, is the condition by which Christian elements of character are to be acquired. Of course, virtues and graces, tastes and affections, are to be valued and preferred in proportion to their relative excellence. Piety and love, which express the applications of the two great commandments, are to be cherished, cultivated, and manifested. He who is truly and earnestly pursuing these two processes of renunciation and attainment, will acquire through his own experience a better knowledge of the elements of a Christian character than any creed or covenant can teach him. The opposing systems, the controverted dogmas, the various usages and ceremonies of Christian sects, will have but little importance for him; and he will feel that there are two parties which he is to satisfy — God and his own soul.

G E O R G E W A S H I N G T O N .

I.

SING of her heroes' deeds, ye harps
That long in Erin's halls have hung!
Give to the world their mighty names —
Give to their glorious deeds a tongue!

II.

Clime of the South! whose seven hills
Uphold the fount of Genius, where
To drink large draughts, from every land
The votaries of art repair:

III.

Thou hast a list of time-tried names;
Some truly great were born of thee:
Some with their iron heel stamped out
The last sad spark of liberty.

IV.

One land the Grecian madman boasts,
Another claims the conquering Swede;
One, echoing back the name of TELL,
Holds up her hands from fetters freed!

V.

Yet brightest on the lists of fame,
Bright with the glory Virtue gives,
Enshrined within a nation's heart,
Our PATER PATRIÆ ever lives!

VI.

No tear-stained laurels bind his brow,
No bleeding land has cursed his birth;
A world's proud meed hath given him place
Above the honored names of earth.

HORACE.