

FEELING.

There is one way of studying human nature, which surveys mankind only as a set of instruments for the accomplishment of personal plans. There is another, which regards them simply as a gallery of pictures, to be admired or laughed at as the caricature or the beau ideal predominates. A third way regards them as human beings, having hearts that can suffer and enjoy, that can be improved or be ruined; as those who are linked to us by mysterious reciprocal influences, by the common dangers of a present existence, and the uncertainties of a future one; as presenting, wherever we meet them, claims on our sympathy and assistance.

Those who adopt the last method are interested in human beings, not so much by present attractions as by their capabilities as intelligent, immortal beings; by a high belief of what every mind may attain in an immortal existence; by anxieties for its temptations and dangers, and often by the perception of errors and faults which threaten its ruin. The first two modes are adopted by the great mass of society; the last is the office of those few scattered stars in the sky of life, who look down on its dark selfishness to remind us that there is a world of light and love.

To this class did He belong, whose rising and setting on earth were for "the healing of the nations;" and to this class has belonged many a

pure and devoted spirit, like him shining to cheer, like him fading away into the heavens. To this class many a one wishes to belong, who has an eye to distinguish the divinity of virtue, without the resolution to attain it; who, while they sweep along with the selfish current of society, still regret that society is not different--that they themselves are not different. If this train of thought has no very particular application to what follows, it was nevertheless suggested by it, and of its relevancy others must judge.

Look into this school room. It is a warm, sleepy afternoon in July; there is scarcely air enough to stir the leaves of the tall buttonwood tree before the door, or to lift the loose leaves of the copy book in the window; the sun has been diligently shining into those curtainless west windows ever since three o'clock, upon those blotted and mangled desks, and those decrepit and tottering benches, and that great arm chair, the high place of authority.

You can faintly hear, about the door, the "craw, craw," of some neighboring chickens, which have stepped around to consider the dinner baskets, and pick up the crumbs of the noon's repast. For a marvel, the busy school is still, because, in truth, it is too warm to stir. You will find nothing to disturb your meditation on character, for you cannot hear the beat of those little hearts, nor the bustle of all those busy thoughts.

Now look around. Who of these is the most interesting? Is it that tall,

slender, hazel-eyed boy, with a glance like a falcon, whose elbows rest on his book as he gazes out on the great buttonwood tree, and is calculating how he shall fix his squirrel trap when school is out? Or is it that curly-headed little rogue, who is shaking with repressed laughter at seeing a chicken roll over in a dinner basket? Or is it that arch boy with black eyelashes, and deep, mischievous dimple in his cheeks, who is slyly fixing a fish hook to the skirts of the master's coat, yet looking as abstracted as Archimedes whenever the good man turns his head that way? No; these are intelligent, bright, beautiful, but it is not these.

Perhaps, then, it is that sleepy little girl, with golden curls, and a mouth like a half-blown rosebud. See, the small brass thimble has fallen to the floor, her patchwork drops from her lap, her blue eyes close like two sleepy violets, her little head is nodding, and she sinks on her sister's shoulder: surely it is she. No, it is not.

But look in that corner. Do you see that boy with such a gloomy countenance--so vacant, yet so ill natured? He is doing nothing, and he very seldom does any thing. He is surly and gloomy in his looks and actions. He never showed any more aptitude for saying or doing a pretty thing than his straight white hair does for curling. He is regularly blamed and punished every day, and the more he is blamed and punished, the worse he grows. None of the boys and girls in school will play with him; or, if they do, they will be sorry for it. And every day the master assures him that "he does not know what to do with him," and that he

"makes him more trouble than any boy in school," with similar judicious information, that has a striking tendency to promote improvement. That is the boy to whom I apply the title of "the most interesting one."

He is interesting because he is not pleasing; because he has bad habits; because he does wrong; because, under present influences, he is always likely to do wrong. He is interesting because he has become what he is now by means of the very temperament which often makes the noblest virtue. It is feeling, acuteness of feeling, which has given that countenance its expression, that character its moroseness.

He has no father, and that long-suffering friend, his mother, is gone too. Yet he has relations, and kind ones too; and, in the compassionate language of worldly charity, it may be said of him, "He would have nothing of which to complain, if he would only behave himself."

His little sister is always bright, always pleasant and cheerful; and his friends say, "Why should not he be so too? He is in exactly the same circumstances." No, he is not. In one circumstance they differ. He has a mind to feel and remember every thing that can pain; she can feel and remember but little. If you blame him, he is exasperated, gloomy, and cannot forget it. If you blame her, she can say she has done wrong in a moment, and all is forgotten. Her mind can no more be wounded than the little brook where she loves to play. The bright waters close again, and smile and prattle as merry as before.

Which is the most desirable temperament? It would be hard to say. The power of feeling is necessary for all that is noble in man, and yet it involves the greatest risks. They who catch at happiness on the bright surface of things, secure a portion, such as it is, with more certainty; those who dive for it in the waters of deeper feeling, if they succeed, will bring up pearls and diamonds, but if they sink they are lost forever!

But now comes Saturday, and school is just out. Can any one of my readers remember the rapturous prospect of a long, bright Saturday afternoon? "Where are you going?" "Will you come and see me?" "We are going a fishing!" "Let us go a strawberrying!" may be heard rising from the happy group. But no one comes near the ill-humored James, and the little party going to visit his sister "wish James was out of the way." He sees every motion, hears every whisper, knows, suspects, feels it all, and turns to go home more sullen and ill tempered than common. The world looks dark--nobody loves him--and he is told that it is "all his own fault," and that makes the matter still worse.

When the little party arrive, he is suspicious and irritable, and, of course, soon excommunicated. Then, as he stands in disconsolate anger, looking over the garden fence at the gay group making dandelion chains, and playing baby house under the trees, he wonders why he is not like other children. He wishes he were different, and yet he does not know what to do. He looks around, and every thing is blooming and bright. His little bed of flowers is even brighter and sweeter than ever before, and

a new rose is just opening on his rosebush.

There goes pussy, too, racing and scampering, with little Ellen after her, in among the alleys and flowers; and the birds are singing in the trees; and the soft winds brush the blossoms of the sweet pea against his cheek; and yet, though all nature looks on him so kindly, he is wretched.

Let us now change the scene. Why is that crowded assembly so attentive--so silent? Who is speaking? It is our old friend, the little disconsolate schoolboy. But his eyes are flashing with intellect, his face fervent with emotion, his voice breathes like music, and every mind is enchained.

Again, it is a splendid sunset, and yonder enthusiast meets it face to face, as a friend. He is silent--rapt--happy. He feels the poetry which God has written; he is touched by it, as God meant that the feeling spirit should be touched.

Again, he is watching by the bed of sickness, and it is blessed to have such a watcher! anticipating every want; relieving, not in a cold, uninterested way, but with the quick perceptions, the tenderness, the gentleness of an angel.

Follow him into the circle of friendship, and why is he so loved and trusted? Why can you so easily tell to him what you can say to no one

else besides? Why is it that all around him feel that he can understand, appreciate, be touched by all that touches them?

And when heaven uncloses its doors of light, when all its knowledge, its purity, its bliss, rises on the eye and passes into the soul, who then will be looked on as the one who might be envied--he who can, or he who cannot feel?