

beautiful thing of the kind we have ever seen. There is some valuable Chinese work, too, in the collection, but it is heavy and uninteresting, in comparison with the Japanese, idealess, soulless, even when most elaborate and costly,—ingenious, but not worth the labour expended on it.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

JAMES HINTON'S ALTRUISM.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Will you allow me space for a few remarks on your article of last week on "Altruism and Selfishness"? I do not wish to make a defence of the altruism so ably and conclusively attacked by the writer. The opinion so designated, if, indeed, it have any adherents, deserves, no doubt, all the hard things he has said about it. But as the name of James Hinton is here, and in the review of his life, to which reference is made, associated with the altruism condemned, I beg, in justice to him, to protest against attributing to him the ideas for which the word here stands, ideas which received the most emphatic negative from his writings, and from the whole tenor of his life. That altruism at least would have had no "attraction for such a nature as James Hinton's." The writer of the article acknowledges, indeed, that his remarks receive no illustration from Mr. Hinton's life; but in the brief compass of the memoir, it was impossible to give more than a few characteristic extracts to show the drift of Mr. Hinton's teachings on this point, and it is not surprising that they should have been misapprehended. When the forthcoming volume of selections from his MSS. is published, a better opportunity will be afforded of judging of Mr. Hinton's "altruism," as compared with that of Mr. Herbert Spencer and other writers.

Meanwhile, it is incumbent on one who has enjoyed for twenty years James Hinton's intimacy and correspondence to guard, if possible, against a misstatement of his views. I will not encroach upon your columns by attempting to show how his altruism is free from all the dangers represented as inherent in that principle of ethics, but I must call attention to one which seems to weigh heavily with the writer,—namely, that it tends to check the free development of individuality and dry up "the fountain of impulse."

The pursuit of Altruism he conceives as a levelling process which would eradicate personal peculiarities, stifle healthy instinct, and immolate the nobler elements of society to the baser, since the "others" for whose sake the altruist foregoes the right to live his own life, must be just those selfish individuals who will accept all sacrifices and make none. In the name of common-sense, let me disclaim for Mr. Hinton and his followers any such conception of social virtue. "Positivism on an island" is hardly a more cruel caricature than this. I must do your writer, however, the justice to observe that the danger he apprehends is not so much that altruism will override individual development (Nature will take good care that it does not succeed), as that the strongly-marked characters, the men of "domineering instincts," who are so precious to society, will, if the standard of an excellence unattainable by them be generally recognised, fail to receive that indulgence and appreciation which they require and deserve.

Now, nothing is more characteristic of James Hinton's principle of ethics than the emancipation it promises to the impulses. An ideal of virtue that meant a perpetual warping and thwarting of the nature, carried with it for him its own condemnation. His altruism was, in brief, a suggestion that, instead of employing their moral force in restraining their passions, men should aim at having a passion that needs no restraint. "Turn the energy which you devote to putting flames out, to kindling flames. The flames are all very well, and do not want putting out; we only want more of them." (I quote from a letter). The rule of service over the heart (another expression for "altruism") has, he would say, this advantage, that it makes it safe for a man to indulge his passion to the utmost, which nothing else can. As long as a man's desires centre around self, whether it be self-pleasure or self-virtue that he seeks, he cannot safely indulge his passion; his virtue will mean cruelty (see the history of Asceticism); his pleasure will be vice. To have his emotions true to the facts of human life, to yield the response of his heart to every claim made upon it, is not for a man to be enslaved; it is to be set free, to be carried along in the currents of a larger life, to enter into the rest and the liberty of Nature. In Nature everything is a means, nothing is an end; and what is Altruism but this,—to regard oneself truly, as a means, and not falsely, as an end? It is to be true to

the fact of being, nothing more. Surely this is compatible with the fullest and freest outpouring of energy into congenial tasks. Let once the antagonism to pleasure be removed from our ideal of goodness—and it is only self-regard that imposes this antagonism, and makes a duty seem the better for being hard—and man's natural passion for doing his best, than which nothing is more absolutely a constituent in human nature, will come into play, with the happiest results.

As I turn over James Hinton's letters and MSS., this "law of liberty" shines out with every variety of illustration from each page. It was the theme which inspired him with perennial joy and hope, as he anticipated its transforming influence on human life, when it should come to be the accepted thought of good. Not less strikingly was the compatibility of altruism with the free play of individuality exhibited in James Hinton's own person. The writer of your article has some "ower true" remarks on the fact that "the men to whom we owe the revelation of fresh sources of moral strength are, we sometimes find with dismay, not elevated above some of the most humiliating weaknesses of humanity." With Altruism on the lips, we find selfishness in the life, and the writer goes on to hint at a sort of correlation between these facts. However true this may be in some cases, it did not certainly apply to James Hinton. Those only who knew him intimately can have any idea of the intensity of the passion for human good which burned in his breast, and absorbed his desires to the utter exclusion of any personal aim. It was simply impossible for him to care for anything in comparison with the moral welfare of man. When released from the tension of temporary business, his thoughts flew back to that object like arrows from the bow. That he sought to promote the welfare of man by following the bent of his genius, is only to say that he obeyed the behest of the great Power that set him his tasks, and rendered him capable of performing just those, and no others.

To have set himself to some self-chosen work of more apparent practical utility, because it was harder, and therefore, forsooth, "more valuable," would have been flat rebellion against the order of Nature, and would have been avenged by deserved failure.

So intimately were the peculiarities of Mr. Hinton's genius, even in its purely intellectual aspects, bound up with his altruism, that it would be absurd to say that he was strongly individual, although an altruist. His individuality, indeed, went to the verge of eccentricity, and beyond. To have known and loved James Hinton is, therefore, to have acquired a boundless tolerance for the freaks of genius, and more than that, a deep and tender sympathy for the mysterious sufferings it inflicts on its possessor.

I think, then, it is sufficiently evident that when your writer says "the life for others cannot be reconciled with the life of thought," he uses the words "life for others" in a totally different sense from that attached to them by James Hinton. If this view of their incompatibility be true, we are landed in the strange contradiction that the greatest benefit of all—the raising of the thoughts of man to a higher spiritual level—can never be rendered by those who most desire to serve their fellows! The writer has, it seems to me, been betrayed into this paradox by a too narrow restriction of the word "Altruism" to its most obvious etymological meaning. "Others" is taken to mean individuals only, not the race.

Doubtless these are the two classes that he describes,—those whose interests are chiefly vicarious, the "parasitic" lives, he terms them, with perhaps an insufficient discrimination between living *for* others and *upon* them; and those who are "endowed with a rich, vivid nature, that cannot forego its own objects." But why should not those objects be such as derive their most powerful attraction from their grandeur and universality? He lives, doubtless, for others who fetters himself to the couch of the fretful invalid, but does he less so who flings himself with a generous abandonment into the work of the world, who sings the world's song for it, paints its picture, or reveals its vision? Why should the man who distributes coals and loaves be an altruist, and he who plucks the fruits of knowledge for unborn generations be unworthy of the title? Does not he most truly live for others whose agonies of lonely toil of heart and brain are cheered by the hope that centuries hence the children of the future will, thanks to him, open their eyes upon an earth more fruitful in human charities, and bathed in an atmosphere of clearer spiritual light?

If I have not trespassed too long on your attention, I should like to add one word more. Mr. Hinton threw out more than once the idea that though he now held the best solution for the

vexed question of the basis of morals was to be in the response of the emotions to every claim, yet he did not look upon Altruism as likely to be the final expression of man's moral life.

Through the liberating touch of "other's needs" upon his sympathies, man's heart was to be set free from the bondage of self-regard; but this work done, it was conceivable that there would not be any longer a conscious reference to others in his actions. Impulse was clearly meant to be his guide; even now it is, in many cases, the only possible one, and the problem is how to make it safe to follow it. That question having been solved in the education of the race through obedience to the law of service, there would be no hindrance to the fullest exercise of liberty. "Pleasures for evermore" filled up the vistas of James Hinton's vision of the future of human life.

"Serene will be our days, and bright
And tranquil will our nature be,
When Love is an unerring light,
And joy its own security."

Perhaps this view of Altruism, as being educational rather than final, may commend itself to some of those who have hitherto rejected this principle.—I am, Sir, &c.,

Dover, May 14th.

CAROLINE HADDON.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—In common with, no doubt, a large number of your readers, I have read the "Life and Letters of James Hinton" with profound and eager interest, and your article of last Saturday upon "Altruism and Selfishness" thus falls upon a soil—prepared, shall I say, or preoccupied? at any rate bristling with reply.

You say expressly that your remarks upon this subject, "though suggested by his words, are not illustrated by his life;" and it is therefore unnecessary to consider whether either and which of the views you discuss can with fairness be attributed to him. This is fortunate for me, because I confess that to my mind his views serve rather as a means of imbibing a deep draught of his noble, hopeful, enthusiastic spirit, than as in themselves either convincing, or even very explanatory.

But what I wish to suggest is that although the question you discuss of the comparative advantages of devotion to one's own purposes and to the lives of others is one of much speculative and personal interest, the broad, practical question, which comes home to us all, and which appears to me to be the one raised by Hinton's life and aims, is not whether I shall live for my own objects or for somebody else's comfort, but whether (whatever my proper place and business in life) I shall direct my thoughts and hopes exclusively to individual interests (my own or other people's), or shall raise and extend them beyond the limit of any personal interests, to the world's good,—to the service, as some of us would say, of God; as others would say, of humanity. James Hinton would have said it matters not which you call it, for the service of God is the service of humanity. His own favourite expression was either simply "service," or "the salvation of the world." The question is one not of rival claims, but of emancipation; of the possibility of rising to a higher life in which there can be no clashing of interests, because all who share it have but one supreme interest,—the good of all; and it is in this sense that he and others call his views "transforming." The "altruistic" and "self" "bases" (I use the words against the grain) are opposed not as Kent to Surrey, but as space to locality. We cannot pass from one to the other at will,—we emerge from one into the other, as the chrysalis into the butterfly.

James Hinton's great hope for humanity was that we should learn to adjust our feelings to actual facts; to see our own lives not as we must all begin by seeing them, as filling the whole field of vision, but as occupying, as they really do, only an infinitesimal fraction of the universe, a very minute portion even of that part of it of which we are able to take cognisance. He constantly insists upon the unavoidableness of the illusion with which we set out, that what we see is the whole, and upon the equally inevitable dispersion of that illusion by advancing experience. And it is in this way, through this unfolding experience, this acquired adjustment of feeling to fact, that he believes that "service" sets us free from the need of "restraint." While we are on the level of choice between mine and thine, we have, of course, to restrain our undue bias towards mine; but if our minds and affections can be set upon something altogether above personal interests, there will still, indeed, be sacrifice, in the sense of willing endurance of pain, believed to tend towards ultimate blessing for all; but there can no longer be any rivalry, or grudging, or sense of personal injury, or indeed, of giving up by one to another; for one who truly cares for the universal good can

scarcely be said to care for anything else, and can certainly not pause to have a choice about the means by which it is to be accomplished.

It does not seem to me that the difference between isolation and subordination—between the life of a solitary student and that of a devoted daughter, to take your own instance—has any necessary connection with the difference between selfishness and unselfishness; except, indeed, that devotion, even to one's own parent, implies a certain elementary power of rising one degree beyond one's own individual self, in which we will hope that few even solitary students are wanting. In either way of life, there is room for the purest and loveliest unselfishness, and the presence or lack of this freedom of soul makes all the difference in the quality of the life and work. Would not the character and influence of Gibbon's "History" have been very different, if he himself had been a man of a very lofty and unselfish spirit?—such a man for instance, as William Law, a student, I suppose, as solitary as himself. I do not mean to deny that absorption in objects which are, in a certain sense, our own—which we must pursue, that is, in our own way and on our own account—may sometimes tend to produce selfishness; only to point out that the two things are neither identical nor inseparable. As you truly say, few people can ever have had to choose between having noble objects of their own and laying aside their own objects for those of others; that is, generally speaking, settled for us. But we do have to choose, or at least it depends upon our own moral and spiritual condition, whether the objects we live for, be they pursued at first or at second hand, shall be noble and permanent, and of a kind which tend to the good of all; or petty and personal, and turning upon questions of immediate pleasure and pain. James Hinton's life and writings may fail to make others see altogether "eye to eye" with him, but they can scarcely fail to shed fresh light and fresh lustre upon the possibility of rising high enough in spirit to get an outlook beyond our own personal horizon, and upon the sense of rejoicing freedom which is won by those who make such an ascent, however toilsome and painful the steps of it may have been.—I am, Sir, &c.,

C. E. S.

USELESS PAIN.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Speaking of a controversy in the *Contemporary*, you say, "None of the Universalists seem to us to face the mystery of pain, or explain why, as God tolerates useless pain for a time—as, for instance, ear-ache or colic in a baby, who forgets it all—he may not tolerate pain for ever." May I say a word or two on the implied assumption that some kinds of pain are certainly useless?

The baby forgets all about its ear-ache or colic. True, but the pain has had an effect, for good or evil, in moulding its character. Again, those who have seen it suffering have been moved perhaps to sympathy. But the chief point I would insist upon is that the pain which seems useless now and is forgotten may be a factor in the education beyond the grave. All suffering is, I presume, ultimately due to some violation of divine laws, and the knowledge of the pains which others have suffered through our sins may be one of the things which teach us how bad a thing sin is. To those who believe in a righteous God, the presumption is that no pain is useless; and I do not see how this presumption can be disproved, till we can trace all the direct and indirect consequences of such pain.—I am, Sir, &c.,

Stepney, May 11th.

J. E. SYMES.

BURNS AND RAMSAY.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Surely Burns has sins enough to answer for, without having any invented for him! Yet the reviewer of Allan Ramsay's "Poems," in your last number, has indulged in a most extraordinary slander on Burns. He says of Allan Ramsay, "He does not shout, like his successor,—

"'Morality, thou deadly bane,
Thy tens of thousands thou hast slain!'"

From the way in which your reviewer introduces this, one would suppose that these lines expressed Burns's own feelings. But if he will turn to the poem from which they are taken—"A Dedication to Gavin Hamilton, Esq."—he will see that they are used as a bitter satire on the Calvinists, who exalted dogma above morality. After enumerating Hamilton's virtues, he explains that they can be of no use, because,—

"It's no through terror of damnation,
It's just a carnal inclination."