

munity to make penal laws for its own protection. It is extremely difficult to show that the act of begging, when unaccompanied by violence or extortion, is a wrong one in itself. Every hospital begs through its boxes, just as plainly as the beggar through his extended hat. There are persons in every community who, through misfortune, or accident, or temporary circumstances, are fit objects of charity—deserve in some sense to be the recipients of the superfluity of the more fortunate—and why they should not be permitted to say so in public, which is all that begging itself amounts to, is something of a moral puzzle. They must know their own cases best, and may fairly plead that, as modern society is constituted, no begging which is not performed in public is likely to be successful. They say they do no harm, as it is open to anybody to pass them unrelieved and unanswered, and complain bitterly before the magistrates that the police interfere with them for doing nothing at all. Indeed, they give themselves a name intended to imply their innocence, and the “beggar” of the police-sheet is among his own people described, honorifically, as an “asker.” Moreover, their plea is by no means universally rejected even by the guardians of the law. Not to mention the crossing-sweepers, who are perhaps rather public functionaries, remunerated by fees in copper, than beggars, and have a useful function of their own and a place in municipal life; and the silent beggars, generally old women, who in London make an income of uncomplaining poverty; the blind are very seldom disturbed in their avocation, and unless so noisy as to excite complaint, ask for relief, whether by word or placard, unhindered of the police, who, moreover, are by turns lenient and exacting towards other kinds of begging to a degree not tolerated as regards any other offence. If begging is wrong in that sense of wrong which interests the community, it should be suppressed at once and everywhere, as it is in Paris, where, however, by an odd whim, beggars are tolerated for three days in every year. Nor, again, can it be said that begging is one of those acts which, in themselves indifferent or tolerable, incite to crime, for it is perhaps the solitary offence in the European codes which admittedly incites to virtue. All Catholic communities hold the giving of money to the necessitous to be a virtue, and the same idea, though questioned here and there by disciplinarians like Archbishop Whately, is the nearly universal theory of Protestants. And it is a true theory. No one likes parting with money to receive nothing,—and self-sacrifice, however slight, is always more or less beneficial. Very few Christians, in fact, of any denomination fail to see the point of the story about Elwes, the celebrated Suffolk miser, who told a clergyman, after listening to a charity sermon, that it had moved him deeply. “So well did you set out the virtue and the blessings of charity, that I almost made up my mind to go and beg.” Yet the exercise of this admitted virtue in the public streets renders the object of the virtue, without whom it could not be practised, liable to imprisonment. There is no other such case in European laws, and the popular explanations of the anomaly, that beggars are a nuisance and that indiscriminate charity benefits the undeserving, are, to say the least, very imperfect. We tolerate nuisances much greater than the beggars, and all charity occasionally benefits the undeserving. People are always giving and lending, and in a certain proportion of cases they give and lend to people who are only made the worse by bounty which they have not earned, even by acknowledgment or gratitude.

The truth is, we believe, that the right of society to punish begging is a part of its much more formidable right to treat idleness, when carried to a certain point, as a punishable offence. That right, though seldom asserted, and still more seldom enforced, unquestionably exists, and is acknowledged by moralists as readily as jurists. One of the sternest utterances in the New Testament, “If any work not, neither should he eat,” is directed against idleness, and the whole spirit of Christianity is directly opposed to a vice which of all others perhaps arises most directly from a spirit of self-isolating selfishness. The root principle of the English Poor-law, that the able-bodied pauper shall earn relief, is based on a principle much higher than utility, and would be sound, as all elevating laws are sound, even if the idler did not so impudently break his contract with the community from which he claims to receive protection, justice, and in some cases help, yet to which he refuses to return anything whatever. That the right is imperfectly enforced, and only in extreme cases, when the idleness inflicts a direct, as well as an indirect, loss on the community, is no proof of its non-existence; and existing, it covers completely the case of public begging. The experience of the whole world shows that the beggar is the worst of idlers, because

he is the idler who does not suffer for his idleness, but rather visibly profits thereby, and therefore incites others to imitate his example. He is fed, lodged, and clothed without toil, and toil, which is always unpleasant, is *pro tanto* shown to be unnecessary. The wise legislator is, therefore, compelled to punish, and in punishing to stamp with disgrace in the public mind—which is chiefly guided by the laws—an offence which strikes at the very basis of the social organisation, and which, therefore, though it may be condoned in cases of helplessness so extreme that, as in the case of blindness, they can never be attractive, can never be regularly allowed. The licence to Edie Ochiltree would have been a breach of the social law, but that it was, in theory at all events, of the nature of a pension granted by the State for past good service.

Will begging ever rise again to its old favour and frequency? We think not. Catholics appear to be losing their long-lingering kindness for the practice, and both in Catholic and Protestant countries the proletariat, the workers who live by wages, are rising daily to power. They will never love the men who, possessing nothing, yet live without labour; and their legislatures will, we expect, show little kindness to the beggar. The Municipalities of Europe are at least as stern in this respect as the Parliaments, and in the United States there is a disposition to treat beggars as public enemies. They are hunted in a State like New Jersey like dangerous animals, and though this arises in part from fear, the American tramp being a potential criminal, it springs also, as the literature of the subject shows, from the deep disgust of an industrious community with the man who returns nothing to it. The beggar will not have a pleasant time of it in democracies, while the Social Republic, if it is ever established, will make short work of him. His life will not be much safer under a Bebel régime than that of a king, while it will be at least as uncomfortable as that of an aristocrat or millionaire. Indeed, the beggar must seem to the Socialist the worst sort of aristocrat,—an idle and useless member of the community, who cannot be deprived of privileges, or even held up to execration as a bloated being. If the world goes as advanced thinkers believe it will go—it may go so differently, almond-eyed heathen whipping us once more into reverence—there will, we fear, be much of the “beneficent whip” in the destiny of that unappreciated promoter of virtue, the European beggar.

#### CHARACTER AND POSITION.

MODERN life is passing, slowly and not always steadily, but still decidedly, through a great revolution, now nearly achieved. The relation of equality is gradually eclipsing every other, that of inequality, where it does survive, taking its least noble form, as most things do in their decay. The poor are still, on this side of the Atlantic, deferential to the rich, but save in that questionable aspect, there is no such thing as looking up or looking down,—we survey each other on a level. The change has been considerably more rapid since the French Revolution, but on a broad view we recognise it as the change from ancient to modern society. Ancient society was essentially unequal; liberty meant dominion. The relation of master and slave, separating the social world by a deep chasm which kindness may have bridged, but which it was never dreamt that justice would fill, was the type, at least in the Roman world, of almost all the relations which existed between human beings. All the important relations of life were unmutual. The duties involved were correlative, not common. Neither the son nor the wife had rights against the husband and father; their right attitude was submission, his was a just and temperate use of authority. Obedience was the right thing for the majority, and a man no sooner ceased to obey than he was at liberty to command. The ideal of democracy is the exact opposite of all this. It has exchanged the idea of correlative for that of common duty, and in stripping Virtue of its specific character it has made human relation less organic, and more monotonous.

One result of this change, obvious enough when sought for, seems to us to have been inadequately noticed, and some injustice is the result of forgetting the much greater strain that has been put upon character, since position has lost its importance. Those who have been educated under the old ideal almost always judge too severely those whose characters have been moulded under the new. A person, for instance, whose youth has been embittered by severity, looks with amazement on the unthankfulness and captiousness of those whose parents have always treated them as equals. Had the yoke suddenly been made so light to him, what devotion, what boundless submission would have been

too much for his gratitude! He forgets that no one can be as grateful for a yoke never being put on, as for its being taken off. He does not know that a whole new class of difficulties emerge, when the relation changes from an unequal to an equal one. No one can measure, till he has tried it, the difference that is made in any relation by the fact that it leaves space for criticism. A man educated under such a *régime* as that of J. S. Mill's childhood and youth, for instance, feels one aspect of the character painfully. But he never supposes himself to see more than one aspect. His taste is not hurt, his sense of the becoming is not jarred, he has no formed conceptions of what his father ought or ought not to do, to be crossed and disappointed. Above all, he has, as long as he deems himself bound to submit to his parents, no sense of corporate responsibility with them. He has one trial to bear instead of many. The one may be heavy enough to outweigh the many, but then it must be heavier than is compatible with the average experience of parental care and discipline, we trust, at any time. The old man who remembers a cowed and anxious youth imagines the young people he sees about him have to deal with a single aspect of character as he had, only that it is a more pleasing aspect. But the truth is that whereas he felt the faults of one side of the nature, they feel the faults of the whole.

The two ideals are contrasted most distinctly when they are exhibited in the same person. A proud and sensitive character excites admiration by forbearance and self-control under a heavy yoke. Unreasonable claim has been submitted to, unprovoked harshness or arrogance forgiven, irritation and annoyance have been put down with a strong hand, and a stern dutifulness has kept the relation which was merely irksome sound and active, till it is ended by death. "Now," it is thought, "we shall see all the sweetness of the nature. If so much was achieved under difficulty and restraint, what will be the result of removing all difficulty and restraint? If such blossoms sprang from a sterile soil, what will not the plant produce, transplanted into a garden?" Such anticipations probably never failed of disappointment. There are, indeed, all sorts of reasons why they should be disappointed, but the one we are considering is enough. Forbearance exercised under a sense of dominion is no guarantee whatever, except in the sense that every good quality is a preparation for every other, for forbearance exercised in an attitude of criticism. The mind, in the position of subjection, enjoys absolute repose from all questioning of the limits of responsibility. It is difficult to allow for the added distaste and disapproval of every course disliked and disapproved, if we have only once allowed ourselves to ask, "Can I prevent it?"

Where deference ends, criticism begins. We do not mean anything nice or subtle by criticism. We speak of something that may be carried on quite as well in the housekeeper's room and the servants' hall as in the library or the parlour. The master whose service is accepted on the basis of contract—so much money from the one party, so much service from the other—is seen, by the best of servants, in a less gracious light than that in which an average servant regards one whom he remembers as the son of his father's superior, who was an object of interest to him before he was aware of merit or demerit, who stands, in a word, in a certain relation to him which will did not create and cannot annul. The subservience of tenant to landlord may not be thought a very noble relation. Perhaps not, but still it is, or at least it was a relation. There was something stable about it, something that veiled demerit and set merit in its most becoming light, something that checked the restlessness of human choice, and gave respect and consideration time to grow. Under the influence of modern democracy, all this is fast disappearing. Respect is given only where it is seen to be due to something in the character. Every one must stand on his own merits. This may appear at first sight a great gain. Reverence for goodness and wisdom, it may be thought, will stand forth more distinctly, when there is no reverence for anything else. We question whether experience corroborates that belief. As long as we respect each other for position, we are judging something we *can* judge. Whether these two individuals are father and son, husband and wife, is not matter of controversy. What may be their due meed of respect or consideration, if they are to be judged on their merits, will be subject of endless controversy. As long as the family rule is in theory monarchic, as long as the duty of son or wife is mapped out in a rough but definite simplicity, the ideal may be difficult to act upon, but there is no other difficulty in the case. But when the one thing that settles our relation to each other is character, we are moulding our views of duty on something that is often shifting,

and difficult to ascertain when it is permanent. There are crises in life when intercourse with those who were absolutely ignorant of a man's character would be not only the pleasantest, but actually the best thing that could happen to him. He needed encouragement, perhaps, and no one could have given encouragement who knew the facts of the case. He wanted an atmosphere of trust, and a knowledge of his character rendered such an atmosphere impossible. It was possible for him to act upon anticipations of good which it was impossible for any one intimate with him to form. Of course really to know the character would be to know its latent possibilities of good; to see that something there was able, as Mr. John Morley finely says, to "cast out the corpse of the dead self;" but such insight as this is impossible to human eyes, and we are certain that the best substitute for perfect knowledge, in such circumstances, is absolute ignorance. All knowledge less profound is in such a case misleading.

We allude to rare crises in the history of the human spirit, but something of the kind belongs to the experience of most of us. Who has not felt the wonderful relief of a sojourn among those who were ignorant of his faults? Not, surely, that there is any real relief in imposture, not that in supporting a feigned character there is anything but torment. No, what he really feels must be the escape from ignorance, not from knowledge. The anticipation of blunders and sins, irrational as the statement sounds often, necessitates blunders and sins. There is—would that we could stamp the warning on the heart of a single parent—a creative power in confident expectation. What others expect us to be, even if nothing would more gladden them than to be surprised, it needs strength of mind not to be. Anticipation, however reluctant, seems to cut a path through the tangle, and even if we know it leads far away from our goal, we are apt to find ourselves treading it.

"But why," it may be urged, suppose anticipation busy on the side of evil alone, "why may not the difficulty of mutual apprehension tend to leniency, as well as severity?" We can only say that as a matter of fact it does not. In this imperfect world our faults invite notice much more actively than our virtues. Evil is everywhere far more obvious than good. "Le crime est bruyant par sa nature, la vertu est silencieuse par la sienne." We forget years of unwearied benefaction in the kindness of a moment, and a burst of temper outweighs, in its effect on the critical judgment, a long course of forbearance. It is not true that "the evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones;" rather the evil that men do lives, contemporaneously with them, while the good often waits their disappearance to emerge distinctly. Memory, we believe, is almost always just; but when memory speaks, the time is past for justice to be much else than pain.

If such be the difficulty of any true judgment of character, it may well be thought a loss that the general tendency of social relations has been towards getting rid of those views of life by which respect is claimed on other ground than that of merit. The change is part of a great revolution, which it is idle to arraign or to deplore. It would be wishing to change the whole progress of society, as it is known to history. The abolition of perhaps the most unmixed evil known to history, Slavery, is but the first step of this process; and every fresh link in the chain is, in some sense and to some degree, a development of liberty. Still, we see no inconsistency in approving some steps in this direction, and disapproving others. There is no inconsistency in rejoicing in a mild spring day, and dreading the sultry heat of August. There is no disloyalty to the will that has decided on the laws of history, in seeing that, like all other laws known to us, they have their disadvantages. Respect for position, we believe, is a sort of sheath which shields while it only temporarily hides character, allowing it to emerge brighter and keener. We have got rid of the sheath, and there is no use sighing for it back again. But there is great use in recognising and allowing for our loss, in recognising the difficulties—not yet consecrated by any traditional attention—of the relations of equality. We do not think, indeed, that as far as the inferior is concerned they are as yet recognised at all. It is seen to be a loss to the superior that he should not be deferred to, but the superior difficulty of justice, as compared with submission, is hardly yet realised. Perhaps the difficulty may diminish. It may be that we are passing through a transition stage, combining the difficulties of both ideals, for such a stage is never recognised till it is past. For the present, the difficulty of justice and the difficulty of deference are increased by the difficulty of choosing between them, and the wisdom of those who

find themselves thus entangled is that each should remember—what indeed is perhaps the only antidote to the greater part of human misapprehension—that the one thing certainly common to both parties is difficulty. Such a conviction at least inspires that spirit of indulgence without which, from such imperfect beings as we are, there is no such thing as justice.

#### VINTAGE AND VINTAGERS IN TUSCANY.

FAR afield from the walls of Florence or Pisa, in deep folds and windings of the long Tuscan hills, lies an immense city, ancient, and roughly elegant, broad-cast over a whole province. In no other way can the populousness of this fertile Tuscany be expressed; here are no solitudes, except at the tip of the hills, where the soil is too thin for vines, and is left to brushwood, birds, and carpets of wild lavender. All below is cultivated inch by inch. A wave of corn, a row of mulberries with their vines, a square of maize, surround the massive house of the tiller of that little allotment, with its small pointed hay-ricks, its ample paved courtyard, and low archways, through which the vast, milk-white oxen come pushing, with bent heads. Dominating these peasants' houses, and generally within sight, is the owner's villa, "La Villa," *par excellence*,—strong as a fortress, with the deep brown roof, the corner towers, and the long architectural lines peculiar to the country; broad, blank spaces, few windows, walls sloping outwards towards the ground, a chapel with its belfry, and a well on the terrace. Human life is never out of sight or out of hearing, nor could a greater contrast be found than that which exists between this mixture of poverty, labour, and antique elegance, and the elaborate, deliberate solitude forced upon a country by the boundaries of an English park. Solitude is beautiful where it is inevitable, but it loses that great element of beauty—sincerity—when it contradicts the natural balance of life outside, in the village and the field. We are content to let the question be, in an article like the present, purely one of æsthetics; ethically, politically, and economically, the Italian peasant, who holds his land on the system of *mezzeria*, called in France *métayage*, or a division of profits between capital and labour, compares well, as far as a careful inquiry into his condition has shown us, with all the corresponding or quasi-corresponding classes elsewhere, except the happier peasant-proprietor of France. Necessarily such an inquiry is made, at the present time, under the most unfavourable of possible circumstances. Taxation on the profits of agriculture has taken during the last years the proportions of a confiscation; all enterprise is paralysed; the nobles continue the cultivation of their patrimonial lands, so that agricultural labour continues, but so languidly that many *contadini* have already left their vines for the towns, where misery grows daily.

No lighter-hearted people, in spite of the constant self-denials of thrifty poverty, can be found than the Tuscans of good peasant blood. They trace their lineage with the same precision as do their employers, and through the same number of centuries, and hold themselves aloof from mixture with the ruder villagers. The conscription, more than poverty, might have broken down these happy spirits, and has indeed done much to overcloud those Italian homes which hold the domestic affections dearer than peasant families do elsewhere; duty and discipline among members of a family, or more properly, of a clan, being carried in Tuscany to curious lengths. Obedience from the young is rewarded by the old with this constant care,—the provision of portions for their sons and daughters; this is the motive of labour, thrift, sacrifice. The peasant rises with the earliest light in summer, for the processes of the many varying harvests of his year, from the hay to the olive, require vigilant attention. He breaks his fast with bread, rather dark in colour, but fine and of excellent quality, and with *mezzo-vino*, which is a thin and rather acid beverage, made by pouring water over the grapes after the pressing; at mid-day he again takes bread and *mezzo-vino*, and after sunset comes his frugal dinner of *maigre* soup and white beans, flavoured with the aromatic herbs that grow high upon the hills; oil and undiluted wine are reserved for Church festivals, meat for rarer occasions. With this, short sleep, and that hearty, unsparing labour into which honest self-interest enters, the peasant knows that he has half of the benefit from every effort of work and of self-denial which he makes; his employer has the other half, and the bond between the two is close.

Except the silk-worm harvest, which necessitates night-work, the vintage is the season of sharpest and most constant labour; but it is also a long festival, less gay, at least in these hard times, than among the happy and prosperous hills of France, where each day

is finished with music and dances, but yet full of delight. In almost every case, the landowner spends the whole time of the gathering, pressing, and barrelling, among his people; there is enough remaining in Tuscany of the discredited spirit of fatherhood in the relation of a landlord to his peasants, to make the work in common sweet to the loyal Italian heart. There is all the difference, as Louis Blanc insists, between "go to work," and "come to work." *Largesse* is given freely; the labourers are allowed to eat grapes from morning to night, which they do by holding up the amber-golden bunches, and crunching through them as the oxen would, but for their basket-muzzles. As each *podere*, or holding, is cleared, the poor from the villages come to glean the vines; later, a lay brother from the Franciscan convent on the hill-top, or a couple of lay sisters, whose huge straw hats quaintly surmount their religious garb, bring round capacious baskets for alms; the most parsimonious cannot find it in their hearts to refuse charity in the time of abundance, although that abundance is pitilessly taxed according to its fullness. On vintage days, too, the *padrone* gives a luncheon to all his tenants, and vegetarians who point triumphantly to the Tuscan labourer's health and muscular strength will learn with chagrin that the prospect of that flesh-pot at mid-day raises his spirits during all the morning hours of labour. That he would be the better for better food as a habit, we should be slow to pronounce. Life is long and healthy among these vineyards, children abound, and the standard of beauty is higher than elsewhere in Italy; great is the contrast in this latter particular between the peasants who live scarcely a mile from the walls of Florence, and the Florentines themselves, who are, as a rule, ugly and ignoble. Short stature, owing to shortness of limb, is the rule among both the handsome and the homely. Now and then one meets with a face in which human loveliness seems to have reached its extreme. We have especially in our mind an exquisite girl of some twelve or thirteen years old, of the finest peasant blood and the most refined type of dark beauty. In the intervals of school, the little, large-eyed maiden was generally to be found thriftily plaiting straw, sitting in the *cortile* of her ancestral home, golden ears of maize hanging above her dusky head, behind her the grey olives and the long blue mountains beyond the Arno,—a line of hills as rhythmic as a line of Milton.

Wine-making in Tuscany, as in Italy at large, stands in need of the aid of science and of capital; so it is with agriculture generally. The plough of Virgil's day is the plough of ours, and in no instance has knowledge advanced to the point of manufacturing wine which will travel in its pure state. Without doubt, the best wine made in Italy is the *Aleatico secco*, a dry red wine which has none of the roughness of Montepulciano and other more celebrated kinds; but this—perfect as it is—can never be tasted out of Tuscany. The vines continue to be grown on mulberry trees, whereas an incalculable improvement in the grape would be effected by the French mode of culture; the processes of manufacture are unchanged from generation to generation, and a source of untold wealth lies unused in the vineyards of the most industrious people in the world. When will capital and science come to their aid? There is no hope of such assistance. Florence is on the eve of bankruptcy, the nobles are selling their family houses within the city, and living straitly on their lands and the labour of their peasants; the silkworm disease is of almost annual recurrence, but science will not assist such complete poverty. In two industries only—the manufacture of oil and of vinegar—there is absolutely no improvement to be desired; and to these, the unrivalled produce of the Tuscan soil, the markets of the world are not open, for the strange reason that public taste is not educated, in England or France, or elsewhere; "best Lucca oil," made of superior hemp-seed near Leghorn, and vinegar concocted of corroding acids in London, satisfy at least the English palate.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

##### THE ROYAL NORMAL COLLEGE AND ACADEMY OF MUSIC FOR THE BLIND.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Walking along Weston Street, Upper Norwood, to-day, I passed a blind man, doling out a feeble tune on a wretched violin. He was tied to a patient little black dog, that held a tin pail to catch a chance coin. What a life for a rational being! the tiny brute by his side both independent and helpful, but the strong man neither. A few rods further on, I reached the high brick wall of the beautiful grounds of the Royal Normal College and Academy