

## HUMAN VENGEANCE.

‘VENGEANCE is mine, saith the Lord;’ but do mankind, generally, believe it? Do they not, on the contrary, believe vengeance to be theirs? Or, if not, do they not act as if such were their belief?

Suppose a new crime to have been committed in some of our Tivertons or Manchesters. The story is, as it were, wafted on every breeze to every family; and public indignation is roused, as it ought to be. But what shape does this public feeling take? Is every one ready, like a good citizen, to have the nature and causes of the crime fairly investigated, and the best course taken with regard to the criminal? Does every one remember that duty is his, but vengeance the Lord’s?

On the contrary, does not every one, the best of us, as a general rule, as well as the worst, say, ‘Vengeance is mine’? Many parents will say this in the presence of their children; and how many masters and teachers in the presence of their wards and pupils! Or, what is practically about the same thing, how many will cry out against the criminal at once; and not only cry out against him, but take vengeance on him in their hearts? ‘Monster he is that committed the deed; and I do hope he will be taken and hung at once,’ says a self-constituted judge or juror, sitting perhaps in the smallest chair at the table. ‘Hung!’ says another of the jury: ‘oh, no! hanging would be too good for such a wretch. He ought to run the gantlet, and then be shot!’ ‘He ought to be drawn in quarters!’ says another.

I should be sorry to traduce human nature; for it is quite enough perverted, without being slandered by me; and yet I have been an observer for half a century almost in vain, if such be not the spirit of the conversation in many family-circles, when some deed of horrid dimensions has been just committed. No waiting for the voice of those to whom God and the laws of the land have assigned the task of executing vengeance. The wise and the ignorant are alike

ready to make themselves both judge and jury, and to execute, in heart, their own vengeance.

The wise and the ignorant are *alike* ready to pass sentence, I have said; but it is not exactly so. The wisest and best among us are, indeed, ready enough; but the readiness to pronounce sentence — the vindictiveness — is ever in proportion to ignorance. So it is after the law has had its course, and the miserable culprit is condemned, perhaps, to be suspended between the heavens and the earth. The fool is glad of it. 'It is good enough for him!' It may not be *too* good, now that his wrath has had time to cool a little; but it is *just good enough for him*. The wise hesitates a little; and, though he may condemn still, he remembers that he himself is not without sin, and, if he had his deserts according to the intents of the heart, his own sentence might, perhaps, have been pronounced ere this.

He remembers that society sometimes educates men to commit the very crimes for which the vengeance of society is so readily elicited. He remembers that education might have made the culprit and judge to have occupied each other's places. He remembers, and he resolves — what he has done a thousand times before — to do all in his power, henceforth, to raise the standard of human education.

Were men wiser and better, they would sympathize more with the criminal, and take vengeance in their hearts less in the same proportion. They would, indeed, love law better; but in proportion to their love of law would be their love of that education, in the family, the school, and the church, which would save the law whole, and prevent the sad necessity of punishing the transgressor. And if they should retain the belief, that, all things considered, it were better the criminal should fall under its sentence pronounced on him, this would not lessen, but awake, their sympathy. That a man must die soon, and of violence (though all men die of violence, as it would seem, and that before long), would not so much occupy their thoughts, as the means of making him holier and happier, and more useful, while he *does* live.

The time will come when our neglect of the criminal will

not be in proportion to the atrociousness of his crime, and the nearness to the hour of his execution, but the reverse. The time will come when men will take vengeance less, and God more; I mean, so far as vengeance must be taken at all. The time will come when, instead of doing all in our power to make a miserable wretch 'feel a thousand deaths, in fearing one,' we shall do all in our power to aid the wretch, who is unfit to live, in *becoming* fit. *How to live* is the great lesson for us all; but it is of especial importance if his whole existence is limited to a few days, weeks, or months.

ALCOTT.

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MY HOME.

BY MRS. NORTON.

I HAVE tasted each varied pleasure,  
And drunk of the cup of delight;  
I have danced to the gayest measure,  
In the halls of dazzling light;  
I have dwelt in a blaze of splendor,  
And stood in the courts of kings;  
I have snatched at each toy that could render  
More rapid the flight of Time's wings:  
But vainly I've sought for joy or peace  
In that light of life and shade;  
And I turn with a sigh to my own dear home, —  
The home where my childhood played.

When jewels are sparkling around me,  
And dazzling with their rays,  
I weep for the ties that bound me  
In life's first early days;  
I sigh for one of the sunny hours,  
Ere day was turned to night, —  
For one of my nosegays of fresh wild flowers,  
Instead of my jewels bright.  
I weep when I gaze on the scentless buds  
Which never can bloom or fade;  
And I turn with a sigh to those gay green fields, —  
The home where my childhood played.

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