

Responsibility.

BY ELIZABETH PEASE.

“There are few voices in the world, but many echoes.”

PARKER.

ALTHOUGH to but few it may be given to be the *voices* of the world, to startle mankind by the enunciation of some new and earnest thought, or even to act on the universal mind by bringing to light some long concealed gem from the treasury of Truth, yet to all of us belongs the power of determining of what voices we will be the echo,—to what principles we will lend the influence of our example and the advocacy of our lips. And great is our responsibility in making the selection. Let none attempt to reconcile themselves to indecision or vacillation, through a plea of their

own insignificance. None are so insignificant as not to possess an influence for good or evil, in the circle in which they move; none so obscure, as to be assured that their words and actions may not affect the condition of ages and generations yet unborn. Boundless, then, is the responsibility that rests on every one of us, in this matter. We live not for ourselves, or our families—for a section or an age of mankind—we live for the *human race*. Individuals die, generations pass away, but the race lives on, and for aught we know, will continue to live on for hundreds and thousands or tens of thousands of ages—and the influence of our example and teachings may be felt through them all; the Truth that is uttered, however feebly, to-day, will live on—for Truth is Eternal.

It is evident from the whole tenor and tendency of the Gospel that a scrupulous regard to the influence of our lives on the universal

family of man, is one of its primary obligations.

When our Saviour instructed us to say, "Our Father," he linked, in one Universal Brotherhood, the entire race;—when He commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves, He taught us to have respect to others, to their interests and welfare, in all we say and do;—when an Apostle told us not to look every man on his own things, but, every man also on the things of others, he struck at the root of selfishness, and gave us a lesson of self-forgetting, self-sacrificing love;—and another Apostle teaches us *how far* this self-forgetting love is to be carried, when he says, "and we ought also to lay *down our lives* for the brethren," shewing us that we are even to sacrifice life itself, rather than do an injury to our brother.

These, and numerous other passages of similar import, clearly prove that we are to regard all mankind, the world over, as one

great family, towards whom, as far as our influence and opportunities extend, we are to exercise a disinterested — all expansive love ; that our sympathies and affections are not to be restricted within any national, geographical, or sectarian boundaries, but to extend their fostering arms around the whole family of man ; embracing, within their comprehensive grasp, the last hamlet on the confines of human existence. “ My country is the world, my countrymen are all mankind,” is the Christian’s motto. “ My parish is the world,” is the sentiment of the truly anointed minister of Christ. “ My aim is to bless the race, through all the coming days of its existence on earth, that, when dead, my voice may yet speak,” is the breathing of the soul of him who truly comprehends the elevating and ennobling genius of Christianity. Under its influence how paltry and despicable become all those distinctions which tend to shut out

any portion of the human family from our sympathy and regard, or prevent us from feeling all the children of the Universal Father as our equal brethren and sisters; from "loving man as *man*," irrespective of the exterior incidents of his existence. How incumbent the duty, in determining the principles which we will sustain, to be guided in our choice, not by their bearing on ourselves, on our families, or any particular state or nation, sect or party — but *on the race*. The turning point of our decision should be — "If all mankind were to adopt this, would it be for their benefit?" If, for instance, it would be for the good of the race that man should cease to hold his fellow-man in Slavery, we ought to advance the spread of Anti-Slavery principles by all the means we can command. If the welfare of mankind would be promoted, were all to become Tee-totallers, it is our duty, by example and precept, to advocate Tee-totalism. If the

race would be benefited, if human hearts would be drawn together into one brotherhood, and the interests and feelings of individuals thus be brought to make common cause against international wars, were the principle of Free Trade to be carried out, then ought we to give our countenance to that principle. If the happiness of mankind would be advanced should every human being regard every individual life as inviolable, then should we plant our feet on the rock of the inviolability of human life, and strive to bring into disrepute the prevalent maxim that man, in an associated capacity, has power to take the life of man. If we believe that it would be for the true interest of the human family, were every individual invariably to endeavor to "overcome evil with good," and that the principle of seeking to overcome evil *with evil* is as unchristian as it is unphilosophical; if we conceive that the *enforcing* principle is the

cause of all the tyranny, anarchy and bloodshed in the world; that it has been the greatest destroyer of property, the grave of liberty, and has converted this fair earth into one great Aceldama, then is it our duty to espouse and act upon the principle of Christian non-resistance.

He falls far below the true dignity of life, and fails, in great measure, to accomplish one main end of his existence — the promotion of the good of his race — who does not seek to establish all his opinions upon the basis of sound principle; or who, through indolence or moral cowardice, turns away from the *investigation* of a principle from a disrelish for the manful effort that is required, the fear of some consequences which he imagines may result from its adoption, the consciousness that his espousal of it may injure his popularity, or bring upon him “the world’s dread laugh;” or, from the false supposition that his counte-

nance, or discountenance, is a matter of indifference to himself or others.

And, let it ever be remembered, that to the one Judge, Lawgiver and King, are we accountable for our opinions and actions, and that our responsibility can never be delegated to another—to man, individually, or embodied in any human organization whatever. We must each determine according to the dictates of our own conscience, and by the help of those means which Providence has put into our hands, what are the requirements of duty, and what the principles by which we will be guided; for certain it is that we shall each have to deliver in our own account at the last Tribunal, and that we shall then call in vain upon any man, or any body of men, to bear the penalty of our neglect of the one, or our mischoice of the other.

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