

WHO ARE OUR BRETHERN?

BY W. D. HOWELLS.

I.



PERHAPS one reason why people dislike the notion of human brotherhood so much is because the ties of kindred are often made so irksome. Society holds you to account for your brother's behavior, and even for his character, as if you had invented it, or at least favored it; and his children can bring your children to shame by their misconduct, though they may never have seen one another.

It is hardly enough, on the other hand, that you receive a sort of reflected glory from your brother's excellence or celebrity; you are then expected to live up to him, and that may be another hardship if you have not his talent or temperament.

You feel that you are fitly answerable for your son, in a measure, though his great-grandfather on the other side, if he could be got at, might sometimes be much more justly made to suffer; but you do not feel that you are fitly answerable for your brother, and you feel that it is cruel of society to hold you so. If he is stupid or tiresome, people will shrink from you, as if you partook of his character because you partake of his origin. Often you do partake of his character. Brothers are often alike; but often they are intensely unlike in tastes, habits, manners, dispositions, temperaments. Often you shall be truly the brother of a man whom you have met rather late in life, and whom you like because he is of kindred nature, while in your heart you may fail to like the brother who is merely of kindred origin. Yet if one allowed the brother of one's blood to come to want or disgrace, society would hold one infamous. If it were the brother of one's soul, society would have nothing to say.

This is because society finds it convenient to shirk its own obligations in the matter, and put the burden upon the individual, whom it is supposed to honor in proportion to the weight of the load it lays upon him. But it is society which ought to take care of the involuntary or natural brotherhood, for the

voluntary or human brotherhood can always take care of itself.

The wrong has gone on from generation to generation, and kinship has been exalted as something sacred, and of a claim too high to be questioned, though Christ so explicitly denied its claim. «Who are my brethren? . . . Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, . . . the same is my brother.» We have never risen to a conception of fraternity such as Christ meant. Our only notion of fraternity is through a confused and rebellious sense of natural brotherhood, with its factitious duties enforced by society, so that when fraternity is proposed to us as the ideal state, we shrink from it in dismay at the thought of any more brothers.

II.

If we look at the facts without preoccupation, it would seem that fatherhood has natural duties and motherhood has natural duties, but brotherhood and sonhood have social duties. A common tenderness, a reciprocal affection, grows up between parents and children and brothers and sisters through the daily use of life and the exchange of constant help; but there can be quite as much love from adoptive children to their adoptive parents, and between adoptive brothers and sisters, as among those of the same blood, and this love can hardly be shown to be different in quality. Parents must love their children. It is their natural duty; they longed for them and brought them here; but the children did not long for their parents, and they did not ask to come. Brothers and sisters have only a social duty to one another, for they did not choose to be of the same blood. Society, however, attributes the same natural obligation to all, and this is unreasonable. A man must not let his parents or brethren suffer. He must, in fact, not let any one suffer, and then he will not let his kindred suffer; but society distinguishes, and hardly censures the comfort which lives on amidst the misery of all the world outside of the family.

A man will honor his father and his mother because their love for him will have bred in him a love for them which he cannot betray

without atrocity. He must obey while young, and be subject to his parents' wisdom, or their authority if they have no wisdom; and as long as he lives he must be faithful and helpful to them for love's sake. But anything more than this in the old law Christ seems to have interpreted in a new sense; he said that those who did the will of the Father of all were his mother and his brethren, and he refused to honor his natural kindred otherwise.

The whole teaching of his life, indeed, is to leave us free and to make us reasonable, and the supreme lesson of his life is voluntary brotherhood, fraternity. If you will do something for another, if you will help him or serve him, you will at once begin to love him. I know there are some casuists who distinguish here, and say that you may love such an one, and that, in fact, you must love every one, and if you are good you will love every one; but that you are not expected to like every one. This, however, seems to be a distinction without a difference. If you do not like a person you do not love him, and if you do not love him you loathe him. The curious thing in doing kindness is that it makes you love people even in this sublimated sense of liking. When you love another you have made him your brother; and by the same means you can be a brother to all men.

When the free man, in the manifestation of that power which constitutes liberty, sacrifices himself to the community, or gives up his personal advantage for the sake of others, and accepts a common right for it, he not only ceases to be wholly savage and begins to be civilized, but he begins to be truly domesticated, to partake of the family life which Christ said was community in doing the will of God. He makes himself the equal of men who had not his advantages before, and becomes in this sense their brother.

III.

As the image of equality is now to be found only in good society where all are theoretically peers, so the image of fraternity is to be found only in the family which, so far as it is united, is really bound together, not by blood, but by love and help and gratitude. The family, like society, is always trying unconsciously to impart itself to the whole of humanity. But it would not and could not do this if its ties were merely natural. That which holds it together is something supernatural: the love that grows up between intelligent beings from custom and the comfort of mutual understanding. We are the only

animals that have this love, and it did not come to us from nature. Among other animals there is quite as much love of offspring as there is among men; the old ones cherish their young, and will come to their help when they are in danger; but it is doubtful if there is any filial love. There seems to be, because the young fly to the old ones when they find themselves in danger, and pine and die if they are taken away. But this is probably from a selfish fear; and as for fraternal love, it is unknown in nature; it is purely supernatural; it is altogether social. Brothers and sisters among the lower animals are wholly indifferent to one another; it is only among men that they show the fraternal feeling which we call the fraternal instinct. It is possible that there may be some instinctive love between brothers from that prenatal love which the mother bears to all her children; but beyond this fraternity is a social feeling and not an instinct. It is chiefly among the most civilized men that this feeling shows itself in all its heavenly beauty as something voluntary. With the savages and the barbarians the involuntary ties of kindred are vastly stronger. If the brother of a savage is killed, he must kill the slayer, or if he cannot kill him, then the next of kin, or, failing that, then some tribesman. In a low state of society kindred binds to the last degree; in the higher stages it grows weaker after the first degree. Clanship and cousinship have disappeared, except among the ruder tribes and the less enlightened peoples. Shall I care for one of my name merely because he is so, or for the grandson of my grandfather, more than for another man whom I have reason to love for his goodness, or my kindness to him?

What is precious in fraternity is the supernatural, and not the natural. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, . . . the same is my brother." This supernatural quality is purely social, the love between people of like wills and hopes and ideals; a love which ignores all sense of duty. Brothers by blood, if they are congenial, love each other because they understand each other; because they are alike, and of the same traditions and conditions. But two persons not at all alike may love each other quite as tenderly for the same reasons.

Liberty is of no value in itself, but is valuable only as a means to equality; and equality that did not eventuate in fraternity would perish. Equality will enlarge itself to the bounds of humanity as fast as people learn that in likeness there is the only rest and comfort and pleasure that men can know; and

fraternity will come as the result of the same conviction.

IV.

BUT to the average civilized man the notion of human brotherhood is not only dismaying; it is repulsive, as the physical contact of a stranger would be. We are all, by our difference of traditions and conditions, more or less aliens to one another—"infinitely repellent particles," like the sentences of Emerson. When we meet an unknown fellow-man our instinct, if not to "heave half a brick" at him, is to have nothing to do with him because we do not know him; we wish to shun and to shirk him. But if we meet an unknown fellow-man in good society, we behave decently to him, because the ideal of society is equality among guests and between hosts and guests. We have to suppose that he is something like ourselves or he would not be in good society; and so we consent to endure him, and when we have been civil to him we find that we like him a little; we like him greatly if it appears that he is of like aspirations and endeavors with ourselves. In any case we make a show of liking him, for any show of disliking him would be vulgar. But the only terms of great liking are parity of aspiration and endeavor.

Without this we cannot have fraternity, and when we have this we shall have a brotherhood liberated from those irksome burdens and galling ties which society now inflicts upon natural brotherhood. Society does this ignorantly, of course, in a conception of the family which is a survival of the times when one family was adverse to another, when each was the germ of an unfriendly gens, tribe, clan, and each of its embattled members might not so unjustly be made to answer for all the others. But in civilization the individual, not the family, has been found to be the social unit; he is precious, and it is he who is regarded. He is regarded in and for himself, and not because he is akin to this, that, or the other one. If he does wrong, he is punished, and none of his kin are made to suffer through the state, as they are in barbarous countries, where the innocent kindred of a public enemy have their eyes put out when he is put to death. In this the state shows itself more humane than society, which still regards the family as the unit so far as to defame a man if his brother errs, and to defame all his brethren if the man himself goes wrong. Society still recognizes fraternity only in the natural sense, and has yet to learn that any love between brothers is altogether

supernatural, and not an instinct, like the love of offspring.

Fraternity is supernatural, as all civility is. The man was an animal and natural; now he is a citizen and supernatural, so far as he is civilized. What we may do, is to civilize him so thoroughly that this fraternal feeling will impart itself to all humanity. At present the most of men do not wish to share in the blessings of supernatural fraternity, because they dread in them some latent quality of the annoyance they find in natural fraternity. From the brotherhood of blood, which they did not choose or seek, they often break away as soon as they can, and treat their brothers on a business footing. They buy and sell with them; they lend and borrow, and take and give usury, or if, for shame's sake, they do not, they secretly feel defrauded. They live apart from one another, and keep their families separate. If one brother prospers beyond the others, they are suspicious of him, and justly, for at the bottom of his heart he knows that they are no longer his equals, and fears that they will sometime put him to shame before his equals. We all thought it very droll when the new rich man ceased to ask his brother to dinner, and said, "One must draw the line somewhere." But we all felt the joke the more because in our secret souls we had the potentiality of the same meanness.

Perhaps, however, it was not meanness. Perhaps it was the simpler or franker expression of the revolt in human nature against injustice. The man who drew the line at his brother knew that if his brother were present and ate with his knife all his guests would laugh in their sleeves, not at his brother alone, but at him too, and would hold him responsible for his brother's bad manners. The escape from such an odious situation, from this injustice of society, is not by the way of greater inequality, as the victim imagines, but by the way of greater equality. You must not, you cannot, deny the natural brotherhood without pangs of remorse and shame; but if you could be enlarged to the supernatural brotherhood you would have a refuge from all your woes. Then your brother would be the brother of every other man; you would not have to disown him or ignore him, for you would not be personally responsible for him if his manners, or even his morals, were bad. Society would be responsible for him, and you would have to answer for him only as every member of society would. There ought to be consolation in this notion for a community like ours, where so many people are getting up that it

is quite impossible for every one to pull his brother up with him.

V.

AFTER all, we *are* our brother's keepers, though a Cainic society has been denying it ever since the first murder. We are put into one another's custody in this world; here, where so many things are in doubt, this is unquestionable. Up to the present time our notion of a custodian has been some sort of jailer. Society really provides no other for the weaker brethren. We imprison people whom we find wandering about without a home; we imprison utter poverty; we imprison hopeless misfortune. We may not all of us think that a very fine thing; but we have to draw the line somewhere, and if we are brought to book about it, we shrug and ask, What are we to do? Are we to give tramps a decent lodging? Are we to secure to poverty the means of livelihood? Are we to succor misfortune without shutting it up and putting it to shame?

These questions, which are of our own asking, must be of our own answering. It is not that misery is growing, but that it is growing intolerable, if not to the sufferer, then to the witness. We have come a certain way toward humanity, and it seems to be the parting of the ways. One path will lead us onward to the light; the other will take us roundabout, and back to the darkness we came out of. In this age a man denies the claim of humanity with much greater risk to himself than formerly. He is in danger of truly becoming a devil; not the sort with horns and hoofs and forked tails, who were poor harmless fellows at the worst, but the sort of devil who *acts* upon the belief that every man must take care of himself.

That is the belief which society, as a whole, acts upon now, as far as it can; but personally we are each more or less ashamed of it, and reject it more or less openly. It is the rule of business, but it is not the rule of life; because it is in the experience of every living soul that men *cannot* take care of themselves.

It is not yet so apparent to us all that men must take care of one another; but in the history of the race that is the most obvious lesson. The stronger man must take care of the weaker, as his jailer, on the old lines, and in conformity to the ideals of the stone age in political economy; or else he must take care of him as his brother.

Jailer or brother, which shall it be? There is no middle choice, and there never was; and

if we do not choose brother, jailer will choose itself. There is something terribly active in evil; it is positive, full of initiative. The weed comes, and flourishes against the hoe; the useful plant must be coaxed to come, and must be carefully tended; the flower must be cherished. All morality, all civility, is the effect of *trying* to be good.

VI.

WE shall not have fraternity, human brotherhood, without trying for it. From nature it did not come; it came from the heart of man, who in the midst of nature is above it.

Where there is love between brothers, it is of the very same quality as love between friends. It comes of the interchange of kindnesses, or from early association and a community of tender memories, or from hardships borne together, from pleasures enjoyed in common. But these, even, will not lastingly suffice, unless there is sympathy of purpose for good. Sympathy of purpose for evil will not do; that will unite men through interest, but it will not unite them in love, for evil is full of hate, and men cannot seek it in trust of each other. We speak of honor among thieves, but there is no such thing.

«Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, . . . the same is my brother.» We can have all the brotherhood of this kind that we will, and we can really have no other. But if a commonwealth is ever to be founded upon this truth, nothing of hate for any class or kind of men will hasten its day. People are apt to forget this simple fact in their passionate desire for a better state of things. They fancy that if they could destroy certain other people, whose greed and selfishness delay fraternity, they would have fraternity; but they would have only enmity, which springs up from every drop of blood shed upon the earth. If the destruction of its enemies would have availed, we should not still be waiting for the millennium, now nearly nine hundred years overdue.

VII.

THE millennium, the reign of Christliness on earth, will be nothing mystical or strange. It will be the application of a very simple rule to life, which we find in no wise difficult or surprising where the economic conditions do not hinder its operation. The members of a family live for one another as unconsciously as they live upon all others. There is no effort, no friction, in their perpetual surrender of their several interests to the common good; and in the state there need really

be none, if once the means of livelihood were assured to each citizen. Without this there can be only chance good in life—the good of accident, of impulse, of risk. There can properly be no self-sacrifice without it, for a man can sacrifice himself only when others do not suffer by his act; if they do, his act is not self-sacrifice, however pure and high his motive may be. But with it we should have liberty, which now we do not have; we should have the power of self-sacrifice, the ability to achieve the highest happiness which liberty can bestow, the universal peace of equality. Till we have this we are restless and miserable; and without equality in its widest and thoroughest sense we cannot have the love

for one another which springs from common experience and mutual knowledge, from common aspiration and endeavor, and which is the love that unites brothers of the same blood. When the voluntary bond of sympathy, the tie of the same feelings, purposes, wills, shall unite the commonwealth, fraternity will have nothing of that painful obligation which very good people dread now, and shrink from. The natural, involuntary brotherhood is often onerous and even odious; but the supernatural fraternity will not be the compression of society to what is slavish in that relation; it will be the extension of all that is sweet and real and free in brotherhood to society, to civility, to humanity.

W. D. Howells.

JAPANESE WAR POSTERS.



OUR or five years ago I stopped for the night at a little tea-house far up in the mountains of Japan. Nowhere were to be seen any railroads, European cast-off clothing, or other «modern improvements»; and in a walk through the village, after a dinner of rice and fish, I was led to believe that at last a spot had been found where things were to be as they always had been. But on returning to the village last summer, there stood at the door a little maiden with a delightful smile of rejoicing, as she proudly showed in one hand an unmistakable nickel-plated American alarm-clock, and in the other an unbroken tin-foiled stick of chewing-gum. Verily our civilization had arrived. The next day, however, in a village even more remote, a still greater surprise awaited me: for, displayed prominently on a blank wall, with an admiring crowd about it, was a veritable poster; and a few more days showed that this innovation in art, if it may be so called, was common and highly popular. Every tea-house had its series, and all the shops in the bazaars were full of them; and wherever a poster was in sight an admiring throng was sure to be seen. A new style of drawing seemed to go hand in hand with the new idea, and even an understanding of our perspective was appreciable.

The interest of the people in the war then in progress was, of course, unbounded, and these cartoons served to heighten it. The subjects of the caricatures, together with the reading-matter, were of a kind to impress the

reader with an idea of the superiority of the Japanese in mind and body over their enemies; and yet in very few cases could the charge of vainglory or coarse insult be brought against them. In these war posters, as in the everyday affairs of life, the Japanese are to be commended for their behavior.

There were many Chinese in Japan during the war, especially in the open ports; and it has been stated on good authority that outside of some few unavoidable annoyances, such as guying in the streets by small boys, they were treated with great consideration and courtesy as long as they showed a proper spirit.

The subjects used for illustration are in strong contrast with those taken by our cartoonists, some trifling occurrence, or even a purely imaginative incident, being more often used than a direct caricature of prominent persons, or the typifying of the two nations, as in Uncle Sam and John Bull.

In drawings of such a necessarily rough and superficial sort it is interesting to note certain characteristics. The accuracy of detail in the uniforms of both Japanese and Chinese soldiers, the care given to all anatomical points, as in the boatman of the «River of the Three Roads,» show very favorably in comparison with much of the same sort of work seen here. In color light tones are used, and there is very little sharp contrast. In printing almost the same care and finish are shown as in the long line of more carefully executed woodcuts, which, from early in the seventeenth century, have maintained a standard seldom equaled by other