

Not Guilty

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Chapter 3: Where do our Natures Come From?

I HOPE the reader will not fight shy of heredity. I trust he will find it quite simple and interesting ; and I promise him to use no unfamiliar words, nor to trouble him with difficult and tedious scientific exposition.

I deal with heredity before environment, because it is needful to take them one at a time, and heredity comes first ; as birth before schooling.

But we must not fall into the bad habit of thinking of heredity and environment apart from each other, for it is both, and not either of them that make man's character.

It is often said that neither heredity nor environment accounts for a man's conduct. And that is true. But it is true, also, that heredity and environment account for every quality in the human " make-up." A pianist, an artist, or a cricketer is " made as well as born," and so is every man. A good batsman is a good batsman for two reasons: (1) He was born with good sight, steady nerves, and sound sense, all of which he owes to his ancestors. (2) He has been well taught, or has practised well, and this practice, this endeavour to succeed, he owes to his inherited ambition, and to the precept and example of other men. So if a man plays a fiddle well, or steers a ship well, or devotes his life to charity : the excellence is always due to heredity and environment. For the cricketer would never have been a cricketer, nor the violinist a violinist, had he been born in a country where cricket and violin playing were unknown. And, on the other hand, a man bred amongst cricketers or musicians will never excel in music nor in cricket unless he has what is called " a gift " ; and the gift is "heredity."

Now, what do we mean by "heredity" ?

Heredity is "descent," or "breed." Heredity, as the word is here used, means those qualities which are handed down from one generation to the

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next. It means those qualities which a new generation inherits from the generation from whom it descends. It means all that "is bred in the bone." If a man inherits a Grecian nose, a violent temper, well-knit muscles, a love of excitement, or a good ear for music, from his father or mother, that quality or feature is part of his heredity. It is "bred in him."

Every quality a child possesses at the moment of birth, every quality of body or of mind, is inherited from his parents and their ancestors. And the whole of those qualities-which are the child-are what we call "heredity."

No child brings into the world one single quality of body or mind that has not been handed down to it by its ancestors.

And yet no two children are exactly alike, and no child is exactly like any one of its forbears.

This difference of children from each other and from the parent stock is called "variation."

Hundreds of books and papers have been written about "variation," and to read some of them one might suppose variation to be a very difficult subject. But it is quite simple and will not give us any trouble at all. Let us see.

WHY WE ARE NOT ALL ALIKE

The cause of variation can be easily understood.

Variation is due to the fact that every child has two parents. If these two parents were exactly alike, and if their ancestors had been all exactly alike, their children would be exactly like each other and like their parents.

But the father and mother are of different families, of different natures, and perhaps of different race. And the ancestors of the father and mother-millions in number-were all different from each other in nature and in descent.

Now, since a child inherits some qualities from its father and some from its mother, it follows that if the father and mother are different from each other, the child must differ from both, and yet resemble both. For he will inherit from the father qualities which the mother has not inherited from her ancestors, and he will inherit from the mother qualities which the father did not inherit from his ancestors. So the child will resemble both parents, without being an exact copy of either. It "varies" from both parents by inheriting from each. ...

Chapter 6: Environment

WHAT is environment ?

When we speak of a man's environment we mean his surroundings, his experiences ; all that he sees, hears, feels, and learns, from the instant that the lamp of life is kindled to the instant when the light goes out. By environment we mean everything that develops or modifies the child or the man for good or for ill. We mean his mother's milk ; the home, and the state of life into which he is born. We mean the nurse who suckles him, the children he plays with, the school he learns in, the air he breathes, the water he drinks, the food he eats. We mean the games he plays, the work he does, the sights he sees, the sounds he hears. We mean the girls he loves, the woman he marries, the children he rears, the wages he earns. We mean the sickness that tries him, the griefs that sear him, the friends who aid and the enemies who wound him. We mean all his hopes and fears, his victories and defeats ; his faiths and his disillusionments. We mean all the harm he does, and all the help he gives ; all the ideals that beckon him, all the temptations that lure him; all his weepings and laughter, his kissings and cursings, his lucky hits and unlucky blunders : everything he does and suffers, under the sun.

I go into all this detail because we must remember that everything that happens to a man, everything that influences him, is part of his environment.

It is a common mistake to think of environment in a narrow sense, as though environment implied no more than poverty or riches. Every thing outside our skin belongs to our environment.

Let us think of it again. Education is environment ; religion is environment ; business and politics are environment ; all the ideals, conventions, and prejudices of race and class are environment; literature, science, and the Press are environment; music, history, and sport are environment ; beauty and ugliness are environment ; example and precept are environment ; war and travel and commerce are environment ; sunshine and ozone, honour and dishonour, failure and success, are environment ; love is environment.

I stress and multiply examples because the power of environment is so tremendous that we can hardly over-rate its importance.

A child is not born with a conscience ; but with the rudiments of a conscience-the materials from which a conscience may or may not be developed; by environment. A child is not born with capacities, but only with potentialities, or possibilities, for good or evil, which may, or may not be developed; by environment.

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Chapter 7: How Heredity and Environment Work

THERE are many who have some understanding of heredity and of environment when taken separately, who fail to realise their effects upon each other.

The common cause of the stumbling is easy to remove.

It is often said that two men are differently affected by the same environment, or what seems to be the same environment, and that therefore there must be some power in men to "overcome" their environment.

I have dealt with this argument already, showing that the contest between a man and his environment is really a contest between heredity and environment, and may be compared to the effort of a man to swim against a stream.

A given environment will affect two different men differently, because their heredity is different. But remembering that we are born without any knowledge, and that we are born not with intellect nor conscience, but only with the rudiments of such, it must be insisted that the hereditary power to resist environment is very limited. So much so that we may amend our figure of the swimmer and the stream and say that no man, howsoever strong and brave, could swim against a stream unless he had learnt to swim.

And the learning to swim is environment, and works against the contrary environment, typified by the stream.

Let us take the case of two children. One has bad and one good heredity. One is a healthy baby, born of moral stock. The other is a degenerate, born of immoral stock. We will call the healthy baby Dick, and the degenerate baby Harry.

They are taken at birth into an environment of theft, drunkenness and vice. They are taught to lie, to steal, and to drink. They never hear any good; never see a good example.

Harry, the degenerate, will take to evil as a duck to water. Of that, I think, there is no question. But what of Dick, the healthy baby?

Dick is born without knowledge. He is also born with undeveloped propensities. He will learn evil. His propensities will be trained to evil. How is he to "overcome his environment, and become good"? He cannot. What will happen in Dick's case is that he will become a different kind of criminal; a stronger and clever criminal than Harry.

But, I hear someone say, "we know that children, born of thieves and sots, and reared in bad surroundings have turned out honest and sober men." And the inference is that they rose superior to their environment.

But that inference is erroneous. The fact is that these children were saved by some good environment, acting against the bad.

For there is hardly such a thing as an environment that is all bad. In the case of Dick and Harry we supposed an environment containing no good. But that was for the sake of illustration.

For the environment to be all bad, the child must be prevented from ever seeing a good deed, or reading a good book, or meeting with a good man, woman, or child. '

Now, we can imagine no town, nor slum, in which a child should never hear nor see anything good. He is almost certain at some time or other to encounter good influences.

And these good influences will affect a healthy child more strongly than they will affect a degenerate, just as the evil influences will affect him less fatally than they will affect a degenerate. Because the poor degenerate is born with a bias towards disease or crime.

Two children may be born of the same parents, reared in the same hovel, in the same slum, taught the same evil lessons. But they will meet different companions, and will have different experiences.

One may meet a good boy, or girl, or man, or woman, and may be influenced for good. The other may chance upon the very worst company.

Let us suppose that two children are born in a Boxtton slum, and that one of them falls under the influence of a Fagin, and the other has the good fortune to meet such a manly and sensible parson as our friend Cartmel I Would not the effects be very different? Yet at first sight the environment of the two boys would seem to be precisely alike. ...

Chapter 10: Free Will

THE free will delusion has been a stumbling block in the way of human thought for thousands of years. Let us try whether common sense and common knowledge cannot remove it.

Free will is a subject of great importance to us in this case; and it is one we must come to with our eyes wide open and our wits wide awake; not because it is very difficult, but because it has been tied and twisted into a tangle of Gordian knots by twenty centuries full of wordy but unsuccessful philosophers, The free will party claim that man is responsible for his acts,

because his will is free to choose between right and wrong.

We reply that the will is not free; and that if it were free man could not know right from wrong until he was taught.

As to the knowledge of good and evil the free will party will claim that conscience is an unerring guide. But I have already proved that conscience does not and cannot tell us what is right and what is wrong: it only reminds us of the lessons we have learnt as to right and wrong.

The "still small voice" is not the voice of God: it is the voice of heredity and environment.

And now to the freedom of the will.

When a man says his will is free, he means that it is free of all control or interference: that it can over-rule heredity and environment.

We reply that the will is ruled by heredity and environment.

The cause of all the confusion on this subject may be shown in a few words.

When the free will party say that man has a free will, they mean that he is free to act as he chooses to act.

There is no need to deny that. But what causes him to choose?

That is the pivot upon which the whole discussion turns.

The free will party seem to think of the will as something independent of the man, as something outside him. They seem to think that the will decides without the control of the man's reason.

If that were so, it would not prove the man responsible. "The will" would be responsible, and not the man. It would be as foolish to blame a man for the act of a "free" will, as to blame a horse for the action of its rider.

But I am going to prove to my readers, by appeals to their common sense and common knowledge, that the will is not free; and that it is ruled by heredity and environment.

To begin with, the average man will be against me. He knows that he chooses between two courses every hour, and often every minute, and he thinks his choice is free. But that is a delusion: his choice is not free. He can choose, and does choose. But he can only choose as his heredity and his environment cause him to choose. He never did choose and never will choose except as his heredity and his environment—his temperament and his training—cause him to choose. And his heredity and his environment have fixed his choice before he makes it.

The average man says "I know that I can act as I wish to act."

But what causes him to wish?

The free will party say, "We know that a man can and does choose between two acts." But what settles the choice?

There is a cause for every wish, a cause for every choice; and every cause of every wish and choice arises from heredity, or from environment.

For a man acts always from temperament, which is heredity, or from training, which is environment.

And in cases where a man hesitates in his choice between two acts, the hesitation is due to a conflict between his temperament and his training, or, as some would express it, "between his desire and his conscience."

A man is practising at a target with a gun, when a rabbit crosses his line of fire. The man has his eye and his sights on the rabbit, and his finger on the trigger. The man's will is free. If he press the trigger the rabbit will be killed.

Now, how does the man decide whether or not he shall fire? He decides by feeling, and by reason.

He would like to fire, just to make sure that he could hit the mark. He would like to fire, because he would like to have the rabbit for supper. He would like to fire, because there is in him the old, old hunting instinct, to kill.

But the rabbit does not belong to him. He is not sure that he will not get into trouble if he kills it. Perhaps—if he is a very uncommon kind of man—he feels that it would be cruel and cowardly to shoot a helpless rabbit.

Well. The man's will is free. He can fire if he likes: he can let the rabbit go if he likes. How will he decide? On what does his decision depend?

His decision depends upon the relative strength of his desire to kill the rabbit, and of his scruples about cruelty, and the law. Not only that, but, if we knew the man fairly well, we could guess how his free will would act before it acted. The average spoiling Briton would kill the rabbit. But we know that there are men who would on no account shoot any harmless wild creature.

Broadly put, we may say that the sportsman would will to fire, and that the humanitarian would not will to fire.

Now, as both their wills are free, it must be something outside the wills that makes the difference.

Well. The sportsman will kill, because he is a sportsman: the humanitarian will not kill, because he is a humanitarian.

And what makes one man a sportsman and another a humanitarian? Heredity and environment: temperament and training.

One man is merciful, another cruel, by nature; or one is thoughtful and the other thoughtless, by nature. That is a difference of heredity.

One may have been taught all his life that to kill wild things is "sport"; the other may have been taught that it is inhuman and wrong: that is a

difference of environment.

Now, the man by nature cruel or thoughtless, who has been trained to think of killing animals as sport, becomes what we call a sportsman, because heredity and environment have made him a sportsman.

The other man's heredity and environment have made him a humanitarian.

The sportsman kills the rabbit, because he is a sportsman, and he is a sportsman because heredity and environment have made him one.

That is to say the "free will" is really controlled by heredity and environment.

Allow me to give a case in point. A man who had never done any fishing was taken out by a fisherman. He liked the sport, and for some months followed it eagerly. But one day an accident brought home to his mind the cruelty of catching fish with a hook, and he instantly laid down his rod, and never fished again.

Before the change he was always eager to go fishing if invited: after the change he could not be persuaded to touch a line. His will was free all the while. How was it that his will to fish changed to his will not to fish? It was the result of environment. He had learnt that fishing was cruel. This knowledge controlled his will.

But, it may be asked, how do you account for a man doing the thing he does not wish to do?

No man ever did a thing he did not wish to do. When there are two wishes the stronger rules.

Let us suppose a case. A young woman gets two letters by the same post; one is an invitation to go with her lover to a concert, the other is a request that she will visit a sick child in the slums. The girl is very fond of music, and is rather afraid of the slums. She wishes to go to the concert, and to be with her lover; she dreads the foul street and the dirty home, and shrinks from the risk of measles or fever. But she goes to the sick child, and she foregoes the concert. Why?

Because her sense of duty is stronger than her self-love.

Now, her sense of duty is partly due to her nature—that is, to her heredity—but it is chiefly due to environment. Like all of us, this girl was born without any kind of knowledge, and with only the rudiments of a conscience. But she has been well taught, and the teaching is part of her environment.

We may say that the girl is free to act as she chooses, but she does act as she has been taught that she ought to act. This teaching, which is part of her environment, controls her will.

We may say that a man is free to act as he chooses. He is free to act as he chooses, but he will choose as heredity and environment cause him to choose. For heredity and environment have made him that which he is.

A man is said to be free to decide between two courses. But really he is only free to decide in accordance with his temperament and training.

Brown is a Member of Parliament. He is given to understand that by suppressing his principles he may get a seat in the next Cabinet.

Brown is very anxious to get into the Cabinet. He is ambitious. His wife is ambitious. He wants to make a name; he wants to please his wife. But he has been taught that to sacrifice one's principles for a bribe is disgraceful.

Now, his ambition is part of his heredity; the things he has been taught are part of his environment.

The conflict in his mind is a conflict between the old Adam and the new; between the older egotism and the newer altruism. It is a conflict between good heredity and bad heredity; between heredity and environment; and the victory will be to the stronger.

If Brown is very ambitious, and not very conscientious, he will take the bribe. If his conscience is stronger than his ambition, he will refuse it. But to say that he is free to choose is a misuse of terms: he is only free to decide as the stronger of the two motives compels him to decide. And the motives arise from heredity and environment.

Macbeth was ambitious; but he had a conscience. He wanted Duncan's crown; but he shrank from treason and ingratitude. Ambition pulled him one way, honour pulled him the other way. The opposing forces were so evenly balanced that he seemed unable to decide. Was Macbeth free to choose? To what extent was he free? He was so free that he could arrive at no decision, and it was the influence of his wife that turned the scale to crime.

Was Lady Macbeth free to choose? She did not hesitate. Because her ambition was so much stronger than her conscience that she never was in doubt. She chose as her over-powering ambition compelled her to choose.

And most of us in our decisions resemble either Macbeth or his wife. Either our nature is so much stronger than our training, or our training is so much stronger than our nature, that we decide for good or evil as promptly as a stream decides to run down hill; or our nature and our training are so nearly balanced that we can hardly decide at all.

In Macbeth's case the contest is quite clear and easy to follow. He was ambitious, and his environment had taught him to regard the crown as a glorious and desirable possession. But environment had also taught him that murder, and treason, and ingratitude were wicked and disgraceful.

Had he never been taught these lessons, or had he been taught that gratitude was folly, that honour was weakness, and murder excusable when it led to power, he would not have hesitated at all. It was his environment that hampered his will.

We may say that Wellington was free to take a bribe. But his heredity and environment had only left him free to refuse one. Everyone who knew the Iron Duke knew how his free will would act if a bribe were offered him.

We may say that Nelson was free to run away from an enemy. But we know that Nelson's nature and training had left him free only to run after an enemy. All the world knew before the event how Nelson's free will would act when a hostile fleet hove into view. Heredity and environment had settled the action of Nelson's free will in that matter before the occasion to act arose.

We may say that Nelson's will was free in the case of Lady Hamilton. But it seems only to have been free to do as Lady Hamilton wished.

When Nelson met an enemy's fleet, he made haste to give them battle; when he met Lady Hamilton he struck his flag. Some other man might have been free to avoid a battle; some other man might have been free to resist the fascinations of a friend's wife. Horatio Nelson was only free to act as his nature and his training compelled him to act. To Nelson honour was dearer than life; but Lady Hamilton was dearer than honour.

Nelson's action in Lady Hamilton's case was largely due to the influence of environment. To hesitate in war was universally regarded as shameful. But, in Nelson's environment, a love intrigue was condoned as an amiable human weakness. Hence the failure of Nelson's will and conscience to resist the blandishments of the handsome Emma.

We may say that Jack Sheppard and Cardinal Manning were free to steal, or to refrain from stealing. But we know that the heredity and environment of the thief had made robbery, for him, a proof of prowess, and a question of the value of the spoil; and we know that the Cardinal would not have stolen the Crown jewels if he could; that he did not want them, and would not have taken them if he had wanted them.

We say that a drunkard and a lifelong abstainer are free to drink or to refuse a glass of whisky. But we know that in both cases the action of the free will is a foregone conclusion.

In all cases the action of the will depends upon the relative strength of two or more motives. The stronger motive decides the will; just as the heavier weight decides the balance of a pair of scales.

In Macbeth's case the balance seemed almost even: Lady Macbeth's persuasion brought down the scale on the wrong side.

If the will were free, it would be independent of the temperament and training, and so would act as freely in one case as in another. So that it would be as easy for the drunkard as for the lifelong abstainer to refuse to drink; as easy for the thief as for the Cardinal to be honest; as easy for Macbeth as for Lady Macbeth to seal the fate of Duncan.

But we all know that it is harder for one man than for another to be sober, or honest, or virtuous; and we all know that the sobriety, or honesty, or virtue of any man depends upon his temperament and training; that is to say, upon his heredity and his environment.

How, then, can we believe that free will is outside and superior to heredity and environment?

In the case of the slum children rescued by Dr. Baraado and others we know that had they been left in the slums their wills would have willed evil, and we know that when taken out of the slums their wills willed good.

There was no change in the freedom of the will; the will that is free in Whitechapel is free in Manitoba. The difference was the environment. In Canada as in London the environment controlled the will.

"What! Cannot a man be honest if he choose?" Yes, if he choose. But that is only another way of saying that he can be honest if his nature and his training lead him to choose honesty.

"What! Cannot I please myself whether I drink or refrain from drinking?"

Yes. But that is only to say you will not drink because it pleases you to be sober. But it pleases another man to drink, because his desire for drink is strong, or because his self-respect is weak.

And you decide as you decide, and he decides as he decides, because you are you, and he is he; and heredity and environment made you both that which you are.

And the sober man may fall upon evil days, and may lose his self-respect, or find the burden of his trouble greater than he can bear, and may fly to drink for comfort, or oblivion, and may become a drunkard. Has it not been often so?

And the drunkard may, by some shock, or some disaster, or some passion, or some persuasion, regain his self-respect, and may renounce drink, and lead a sober and useful life. Has it not been often so?

And in both cases the freedom of the will is untouched: it is the change in the environment that lifts the fallen up, and beats the upright down.

We might say that a woman's will is free, and that she could, if she wished, jump off a bridge and drown herself. But she cannot wish. She is happy, and loves life, and dreads the cold and crawling river. And yet, by

some cruel turn of fortune's wheel, she may become destitute and miserable; so miserable that she hates life and longs for death, and then she can jump into the dreadful river and die.

Her will was free at one time as at another. It is the environment that has wrought the change. Once she could not wish to die: now she cannot wish to live.

The apostles of free will believe that all men's wills are free.

But a man can only will that which he is able to will. And one man is able to will that which another man is unable to will. To deny this is to deny the commonest and most obvious facts of life.

The will is as free in one nation and in one class as in another. Who would more willingly return a blow, an Irish soldier, or an English Quaker? Who would be readier to stab a rival, an English curate, or a Spanish smuggler? The difference does not concern the freedom of the will: it is a difference of heredity and environment.

The wills of a priest and a sailor are free-free to make love in every port, and to swear in every breeze. The difference is one of environment.

The free will party look upon a criminal as a bad man, who could be good

if he wished: but he cannot wish.

The free will party say that if Smith wills to drink he is bad. But we say that Smith drinks, and to drink is bad; but Smith drinks because he is Smith.

The free will party say, "then he was born bad." But we say "no: he was born Smith."

We all know that we can foretell the action of certain men in certain cases, because we know the men.

We know that under the same conditions Jack Sheppard would steal and Cardinal Manning would not steal. We know that under the same conditions the sailor would flirt with the waitress, and the priest would not; that the drunkard would get drunk, and the abstainer would remain sober. We know that Wellington would refuse a bribe, that Nelson would not run away, that Buonaparte would grasp at power, that Abraham Lincoln would be loyal to his country, that Torquemada would not spare a heretic. Why? If the will is free, how can we be sure, before a test arises, how the will must act?

Simply because we know that heredity and environment have so formed and moulded men and women that under certain circumstances the action of their wills is certain.

Heredity and environment having made a man a thief, he will steal. Heredity and environment having made a man honest, he will not steal.

That is to say, heredity and environment have decided the action of the will, before the time has come for the will to act.

This being so—and we all know that it is so—what becomes of the sovereignty of the will?

Let any man that believes that he can "do as he likes" ask himself why he likes, and he will see the error of the theory of free will, and will understand why the will is the servant and not the master of the man: for the man is the product of heredity and environment, and these control the will.

As we want to get this subject as clear as we can, let us take one or two familiar examples of the action of the will.

Jones and Robinson meet and have a glass of whisky. Jones asks Robinson to have another. Robinson says, "no thank you, one is enough." Jones says, "all right: have another cigarette." Robinson takes the cigarette. Now, here we have a case where a man refuses a second drink, but takes a second smoke. Is it because he would like another cigarette, but would not like another glass of whisky? No. It is because he knows that it is safer not to take another glass of whisky.

How does he know that whisky is dangerous? He has learnt it—from his environment.

"But he could have taken another glass if he wished."

But he could not wish to take another, because there was something he wished more strongly—to be safe.

And why did he want to be safe? Because he had learnt—from his environment—that it was unhealthy, unprofitable, and shameful to get drunk. Because he had learnt—from his environment—that it is easier to avoid forming a bad habit than to break a bad habit when formed. Because he valued the good opinion of his neighbours, and also his position and prospects.

These feelings and this knowledge ruled his will, and caused him to refuse the second glass.

But there was no sense of danger, no well-learned lesson of risk to check his will to smoke another cigarette. Heredity and environment did not warn him against that. So, to please his friend, and himself, he accepted.

Now suppose Smith asks Williams to have another glass. Williams takes it, takes several, finally goes home—as he often goes home. Why?

Largely because drinking is a habit with him. And not only does the mind instinctively repeat an action, but, in the case of drink, a physical craving is set up, and the brain is weakened.

It is easier to refuse the first glass than the second; easier to refuse the second than the third; and it is very much harder for a man to keep sober who has frequently got drunk.

So, when poor Williams has to make his choice, he has habit against him, he has a physical craving against him, and he has a weakened brain to think with.

"But Williams could have refused the first glass."

No. Because in his case the desire to drink, or to please a friend, was stronger than his fear of the danger. Or he may not have been so conscious of the danger as Robinson was. He may not have been so well taught, or he may not have been so sensible, or he may not have been so cautious. So that his heredity and environment, his temperament and training, led him to take the drink, as surely as Robinson's heredity and environment led him to refuse it.

And now, it is my turn to ask a question. If the will is "free," if conscience is a sure guide, how is it that the free will and the conscience of Robinson caused him to keep sober, while the free will and the conscience of Williams caused him to get drunk?

Robinson's will was curbed by certain feelings which failed to curb the will of Williams. Because in the case of Williams the feelings were stronger on the other side.

It was the nature and the training of Robinson which made him refuse the second glass, and it was the nature and the training of Williams which made him drink the second glass.

WHAT HAD FREE WILL TO DO WITH IT?

We are told that every man has a free will, and a conscience.

Now, if Williams had been Robinson, that is to say if his heredity and his environment had been exactly like Robinson's, he would have done exactly as Robinson did.

It was because his heredity and environment were not the same that his act was not the same.

Both men had free wills. What made one do what the other refused to do?

Heredity and environment. To reverse their conduct we should have to reverse their heredity and environment.

Let us take another familiar instance. Bill Hicks is a loafer. He "doesn't like work." He used to work, but he was out on strike for six months, and since then he has done no more work than he could help. What has changed this man's free will to work into a free will to avoid work?

Hicks used to work. He was a steady young fellow. Why did he work? He did not know. He had always worked. He went to work just as he ate his dinner, or washed his hands. But he did not think much. He lived chiefly

by custom; habit. He did things because he had always done them, and because other men did them. He knew no other way.

He worked. He worked hard: for nine hours a day. He got twenty-five shillings a week. He paid twelve shillings for lodging and board, and he spent the rest, as others spent it, on similar boots and coats, and a better suit, and the usual amount of beer and tobacco, and the usual music hall.

He thought those things were necessary, or rather he felt that they were.

He did not love his work. There was no interest in it. It was hard, it was dirty, there was no credit to be got by doing it. It was just an affair of habit—and wages.

Then he was half a year on strike. He had less food, and less beer, and no music hall. But he had a very great deal less work, and more liberty, and—no "boss".

Men love liberty. It is a love that is bred in the race. They do not love shovelling clay into a barrow, and pushing the barrow up a plank. There is nothing in it that appeals to their humanity: and it is dirty, and laborious, and it makes a man a prisoner and a slave.

Hicks found that the difference between working and loafing was a difference of food, clothing, and beer, on the one hand, and on the other hand, of unpleasant and hard labour.

He found he could do with much less beer and beef, and that liberty was sweet. He did not think this out. He seldom thought: he was never trained to think. But the habit of toil was broken, and the habit of freedom was formed. Also he had found out that he could live without so much toil, and live more pleasantly, if more sparsely.

What had changed the free will of Hicks from a will to work to a will to loaf? Change of experience: change of environment.

Now Hicks is as lazy, as useless, and as free as a duke.

But, someone asks, "where was his pride; where was his sense of duty; where was his manhood?" And it seems to me those questions ought to be put to the duke. But I should say that Bill Hicks' pride and sense of duty were just overpowered by his love of liberty, his distaste for soulless toil, and his forgetfulness of the beautiful moral lesson that a man who will not work like a horse for a pound a week is a lazy beast, whilst the man who does nothing—except harm—for a hundred thousand a year, is an honourable gentleman, with a hereditary seat in the House of Peers.

In fact Hicks had found his heredity too strong for his training. But what had free will to do with it?

The duke has a free will. Does it ever set him wheeling clay up a plank? No. Why not? Because, as in the case of Hicks, heredity and environment

cause the duke to love some other.

"But the duke has no need to work." That is how Hicks feels. "But Hicks could work if he liked." So could the duke. But neither of these men can "like." That is just what is the matter with them both.

Two boys work at a hard and disagreeable trade. One leaves it, finds other work, "gets on," is praised for getting on. The other stays at the trade all his life, works hard all his life, is poor all his life, and is respected as an honest and humble working man; that is to say, he is regarded by society as Mr. Dorgan was regarded by Mr. Dooley—"he is a fine man, and I despise him."

What causes these two free wills to will so differently? One boy knew more than the other boy. He "knew better." All knowledge is environment. Both boys had free wills. It was in knowledge they differed: environment!

Those who exalt the power of the will, and belittle the power of environment, belie their words by their deeds.

For they would not send their children amongst bad companions or allow them to read bad books. They would not say the children have free will and therefore have power to take the good and leave the bad.

They know very well that evil environment has power to pervert the will, and that good environment has power to direct it properly.

They know that children may be made good or bad by good or evil training, and that the will follows the training.

That being so, they must also admit that the children of other people may be made good or bad by training.

And if a child gets bad training, how can free will save it? Or how can it be blamed for being bad? It never had a chance to be good. That they know this is proved by their carefulness in providing their own children with better environment.

As I have said before, every church, every school, every moral lesson is a proof that preachers and teachers trust to good environment, and not to free will, to make children good.

In this, as in so many other matters, actions speak louder than words.

That, I hope, disentangles the many knots into which thousands of learned men have tied the simple subject of free will; and disposes of the claim that man is responsible because his will is free. But there is one other cause of error, akin to the subject, on which I should like to say a few words.

We often hear it said that a man is to blame for his conduct because "he knows better."

It is true that men do wrong when they know better. Macbeth "knew better" when he murdered Duncan. But it is true, also, that we often think

a man "knows better," when he does not know better.

For a man cannot be said to know a thing until he believes it.

If I am told that the moon is made of green cheese, it cannot be said that I know it to be made of green cheese.

Many moralists seem to confuse the words "to know" with the words "to hear."

Jones reads novels and plays opera music on Sunday. The Puritan says Jones "knows better," when he means that Jones has been told that it is wrong to do those things.

But Jones does not know that it is wrong. He has heard someone say that it is wrong, but does not believe it. Therefore it is not correct to say that he knows it.

And, again, as to that matter of belief. Some moralists hold that it is wicked not to believe certain things, and that men who do not believe those things will be punished.

But a man cannot believe a thing he is told to believe: he can only believe a thing which he can believe; and he can only believe that which his own reason tells him is true.

It would be no use asking Sir Roger Ball to believe that the earth is flat. He could not believe it.

It is no use asking an agnostic to believe the story of Jonah and the whale. He could not believe it. He might pretend to believe it. He might try to believe it. But his reason would not allow him to believe it.

Therefore it is a mistake to say that a man "knows better," when the fact is that he has been told "better" and cannot believe what he has been told.

That is a simple matter, and looks quite trivial; but how much ill-will, how much intolerance, how much violence, persecution, and murder have been caused by the strange idea that a man is wicked because his reason cannot believe that which to another man's reason seems quite true.

Free will has no power over a man's belief. A man cannot believe by will, but only by conviction. A man cannot be forced to believe. You may threaten him, wound him, beat him, burn him; and he may be frightened, or angered, or pained; but he cannot believe, nor can he be made to believe. Until he is convinced.

Now, truism as it may seem, I think it necessary to say here that a man cannot be convinced by abuse, nor by punishment. He can only be convinced by reason.

Yes. If we wish a man to believe a thing, we shall find a few words of reason more powerful than a million curses, or a million bayonets. To burn

a man alive for failing to believe that the sun goes round the world is not to convince him. The fire is searching, but it does not seem to him to be relevant to the issue. He never doubted that fire would burn; but perchance his dying eyes may see the sun sinking down into the west, as the world rolls on its axis. He dies in his belief. And knows no "better."

Chapter 12: Guilty or Not Guilty?

WE are to ask whether it is true that everything a man does is the only thing he could do, at the instant of his doing it.

This is a very important question, because if the answer is yes, all praise and all blame are undeserved.

All praise and all blame.

Let us take some revolting action as a test.

A tramp has murdered a child on the highway, had; robbed her of a few coppers, and has thrown her body into a ditch.

"Do you mean to say that tramp could not help doing that ? Do you mean to say he is not to blame ? Do you mean to say he is not to be punished ? "

Yes. I say all those things; and if all those things are not true this book is not worth the paper it is printed on.

Prove it ? I have proved it. But I have only instanced venial acts, and now we are confronted with murder. And the horror of murder drives men almost to frenzy, so that they cease to think : they can only feel.

Murder. Yes, a brutal murder. It comes upon us with a sickening shock. But I said in my first chapter that I proposed to defend those whom God and man condemn, and to demand justice for those whom God and man have wronged. I have to plead for the bottom dog : the lowest, the most detested, the worst.

The tramp has committed a murder. Man would loathe him, revile him, hang him: God would cast him into outer darkness.

"Not," cries the pious Christian, "if he repent."

I make a note of the repentance and pass on.

The tramp has committed a murder. It was a cowardly and cruel murder, and the motive was robbery.

But I have proved that all motives and all powers ; all knowledge and capacity, all acts and all words, are caused by heredity and environment.

I have proved that a man can only be good or bad as heredity and environment cause him to be good or bad ; and I have proved these things

because I have to claim that all punishments and rewards, all praise and blame, are undeserved.

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