CHAPTER IV

HAPPY

All work, even cotton-spinning, is noble; work is alone noble:

be that here said and asserted once more. And in like man-
ner too all dignity is painful; a life of ease is not for any man, nor
for any god. The life of all gods figures itself to us as a Sublime
Sacrifice—earnestness of Infinite Battle against Infinite Labour.
Our highest religion is named the ‘Worship of Sorrow.’ For the
son of man there is no noble crown, well worn, or even ill worn,
but is a crown of thorns!—These things, in spoken words, or still
better, in felt emotions alive in every heart, were once well known.

Does not the whole watchfulness, the whole Atheism as I call
it, of man’s ways, in these generations, shadow itself for us in
that unspeakable Life-philosophy of his: The pretension to be
what he calls ‘happy’? Every pitifullest whistler that walks
within a skin has his head filled with the notion that he is, shall
be, or by all human and divine laws ought to be, happy. His
wishes, the pitifullest whistler’s, are to be flou-"s in ever-gentle current
of enjoyment, impossible even for the gods. The prophets preach
to us, Thou shalt be happy, thou shalt love pleasant things, and
find them. The people clamour, Why have we not found pleasant
things?

We construct our theory of Human Duties, not on any Greatest-
Nobleness Principle, never so mistaken; no, but on a Greatest-
Happiness Principle. ‘The word Soul with us, as in some Slavonic
dialects, seems to be synonymous with Stomach.’ We plead and
speak, in our Parliaments and elsewhere, not as from the Soul,
but from the Stomach;—wherefore, indeed, our pleadings are
so slow to profit. We plead not for God’s justice; we are not
assembled to stand clamouring and pleading for our own ‘interests,’
eur own rents and trade-profits; we say, They are the ‘interests’
of so many; there is such an intense desire for them in us! We
demand Free-Trade, with much just vociferation and benevo-

3 An all-purpose term of reproach or contempt.
lence. That the poorer classes, who are terribly ill-off at present, may have cheaper New-Orleans bacon. Men ask on Free-trade platforms, How can the indomitable spirit of Englishmen be kept up without plenty of bacon? We shall become a ruined Nation! — Surely, my friend, plenty of bacon is good and indispensable; but, I doubt, you will never get even bacon by aiming only at that. You are men, not animals of prey, well-nursed or ill-nursed. Your Greatest-Happiness Principle seems to me fast becoming a rather unhappy one. — What if we should cease babbling about happiness, and leave it resting on its own basis, as it is used to do?

A gifted Byron riles is his wrath; and feeling too surely that he for his part is not happy," declared the same in very violent language, as a piece of news that may be interesting. It evidently has surprised him much. One dislikes to see a man and poet reduced to proclaim on the streets such tidings; but on the whole, as matters go, that is not the most dishonest. Byron speaks the truth in this matter. Byron's large audience indicates how true it is felt to be.

Happy, my brother? First of all, what difference is it whether thou art happy or not! Today becomes Yesterday so fast, all Tomorrows become Yesterdays; and then there is no question whatever of the happiness, but quite another question. Nay, thou hast such a sacred pity left at least for thyself, thy very gains once gone ever into Yesterday become joys to thee. Besides, thou knowest not what heavenly blessedness and indispensible satiric virtue was in them; thou shalt only know it after many days, when thou art wise! — A benevolent old Surgeon sat once in our company, with a Patient fallen sick by gormandising, whom he had just, too briefly in the Patient's judgment, been examining. The foolish Patient still at intervals continued to break in on our discourse, which rather promised to take a philosophic turn; "But I have lost my appetite," said he, objec-
tively, with a tone of iritated pathos; "I have no appetite, I can't eat!" — "My dear fellow," answered the Doctor in mildest tone, "it isn't of the slightest consequence," — and continued his philosophical discursions with us.

Or does the reader not know the history of that Scottish iron Meehantrop? The inmates of some town mansion, in those Northern parts, were thrown into the deepest alarm by in-
disturbable symptoms of a ghost inhabiting the next house, or perhaps even the partition-wall! Ever at a certain hour, with pre-
terrestrial gaunting, growing and screeching, which attended as running bass, there began, in a horrid, semi-articulate, unearthly voice, this song: "Once I was hap-hap-happy, but now I'm meas-erable! Cluck-tack-clack, guarr-r-r, whiz-z: Once I was hap-hap-happy, but now I'm meas-erable!" — Rest, rest, perturbed spirit; — or indeed, as the good old Doctor said: My dear fellow, it isn't of the slightest consequence! But no, the perturbed spirit could not rest; and to the neighbours, fretted, affrighted, or at least insufferably bored by him, it was of such consequence that they had to go and examine in his haunted chamber. In his haunted chamber, they find that the perturbed spirit is an unfortunate — Imitator of Byren? No, is an unfortunate rusty Meat-jack, gnar-ning and creaking with rest and work; and this, in Scottish dialect, is its Byromian musical Life-philosophy, sung according to ability!

Truly, I think the man who goes about pohterling and upcoring for his happiness,— pohterling, and were it ballot-boxing, poem-making, or in what way soever fusing and exerting himself, — he is not the man that will help us to 'get our loaves and distarts arrested!' No, he is not on the way to increase the number, — by at least one unit and his tail! Observe, too, that this is all a modern affair, belongs not to the old heroic times, but to these distart now times. Happiness our beings's end and aim is at bottom, if we will count well, not yet two centuries old in the world.

The only happiness a brave man ever troubled himself with asking much about was, happiness enough to get his work done. Not 'I can eat!' but 'I can work!' that was the burden of all wise complaining among men. It is, after all, the one unhappiness of a man. That he cannot work; that he cannot get his destiny as a man fulfilled. Behold, the day is passing swiftly over, our life is passing swiftly over, and the night comes, wherein no man can work. The night once come, our happiness, our unhappiness, — it is all abolished, vanished, clean gone; a thing that has been: 'not of the slightest consequence' whether we were happy as euytus Curtis, or the fattest pig of Epicurean; or un-

9 Horace, Sat. 1-4. 10 Pope, Essay on Man, IV.i. 11 John 9:4. 12 Sir William Curtis (c. 1820), London merchant and M.P., was a fat, vulgar reseonablist. "No man of his time," it is said, "was ever the subject of so much ridicule." 13 Cf. Boece, Epistles, Liv.15-16.
happy as Job with poets' words, as musical Byron with Gismonda, and sensibilities of the heart, as the unmusical Mast-Jack with hard labour and rue! But our work,—behold that is not abolished, that has not vanished: our work, behold, it remains, or the west of it remains;—for endless Times and Eternities, remains; and that is now the sole question with us forevermore! Brief brawling Pay, with its noisy phantoms, its poor paper-crowned times-gift, is gone; and divine everlasting Night, with her star-shaded, with her silences and herveracities, is come! What hast thou done, and how? Happiness, unhappiness: all that was but the singer thou hastet; thou hast spent all that, in measuring thyself hitherward, not a coin of it remains with thee, it is all spent, eaten: and now thy work, where is thy voice? Swift, out with it, let us see thy work!

Of a truth, if man were not a poor hungry dastard, and even much of a blockhead withal, he would cease criticizing his victuals to such extent; and criticize himself rather, what he does with his victuals!

1 Job 3:8.
6 Byron's poetic romance, The Gismonda.