

TO SEEK GROWTH IN CHARITY

When Eleanor called one evening last spring to give me this assignment, I didn't resist too much – partly because I couldn't say “no” to Eleanor, partly because it was a safe distance away, and partly because I realized that I needed to study the “Objects and Aims” carefully in order to free myself from a tendency to feel annoyance over the need for memorizing them, annoyance over the seeming confusion in the order of the listings in the “Ode” and the “Objects and Aims”. From the beginning I had been aware of the high standards suggested, but I had not permitted myself to be completely receptive to them in their biggest sense.

I suppose to be worthy of being a P.E.O. we must constantly be striving to live in accordance with these qualities. There's nothing new here. We all believe in all of them. The terminology may be different, but all are included in and stem from our religions – whatever be the name of the denomination. Perhaps our “Objects and Aims” may serve to point up these beliefs in our social life, and serve as a reminder to translate them into action. We can't be reminded too often of our real purpose, “to being out joy and happiness” where we are. Surely adhering to these qualities gives us a firm foundation.

Perhaps these terms don't mean quite the same to any two people, but “In each of us,” someone has said, “in differing degree, they stir some inner spark of receptivity.” What we bring to them determines how far we go. The principles themselves never fail, never fall short – it's we who fail at times. Surely such objects and aims, as we dwell on them in their highest sense, should inspire us to dig in, spiritually speaking, more tenaciously than ever in striving to live up to the best that is in us.

Mary Allen, Ella, Alice, Suela, Hattie, Franc, and Alice Virginia – just girls, were our founders; but we have evidence that they had glimpsed rather clearly the vital element in human relationships, love for all mankind. To what extent is revealed in those few but important words: “toward all with whom we associate.” Notice it is toward all. So this was not merely a pledge of friendship to each other. It is a much bigger thing, more vital, more far-reaching. It suggests a pattern of living.

When I began to think about this assignment, I turned to the dictionary and to Bartlett's Quotations to see what others have had to say about these key words: Faith, Love, Purity, Justice, and Truth. Then I browsed through my Scribble Books and clippings – with no thought of any particular plan for development. I was reading just for enjoyment – for the time being forgetting that January 27th (recently having become February 14th) would catch up with me. All of that was last summer during some hot vacation days. More recently when I realized the need to get down to work – and in the absence of some really original or clever way of developing the subject – I decided to pass on to you my thinking and some of my readings, bodily. I am not really apologizing for that but I would have felt more comfortable about doing this had I never met this sentence from Kipling: “He wrapped himself in quotations, as a beggar would enfold himself in

the purple of an Emperor.” The selections that I use are not new to you, I am sure, but since I have enjoyed spending time with them, I am hoping that you will also.

First, let us look at the word Charity. Webster defines it as universal love. Surely that points to the need for impersonalizing it – a love for all mankind, a state of desiring the welfare of all. Then must we not see each other and all others through the lens of Love! If we can stick fast (as Webster defines adhere) to the quality of Love, our thinking will not be cluttered with any debris of envy, resentment, or unkindness in any form directed toward a P.E.O. sister or toward anyone with whom we associate. When we can put it into practice to that extent, we will be able to extend it to include all mankind.

Webster defines Faith as trust in God and his goodness. This could not be a blind faith; it is an active recognition of the power of good. It is acceptance before proof, according to George Channing. Perhaps these three lines found on the wall of an old building in England catch the true meaning:

“Fear knocked at the door;
Faith answered;
No one was there.”

Or in a lighter vein, Barrie in The Little White Bird writes: “The reason why birds can fly and we can’t is simply that they have perfect faith, for to have faith is to have wings.”

Love is an all-inclusive term for surely all of these qualities are being expressed when we love. In the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, Paul has told us that without love, we are nothing. Mildred Peterson, a current writer, says it this way:

“To love is to recognize loveliness whether it be in thought, or sight, or sound. To love is to respond to another’s expression of gratitude, or gentleness, or compassion even though that expression be a timid or an unaccustomed one. To love is to be mentally alert to another’s human or spiritual needs. It is to know and to feel loving-kindness within oneself toward one’s fellows and to cast out any sense of grievance, resentment, or hate, however nebulous.”

Purity, according to Webster, is a state or quality of being clean. Clean thoughts, of course. As Matthew expresses it, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” In Titus we read: “Unto the pure all things are pure.” Surely joy and harmony are fruitage of such right thinking.

Justice is defined as absolute fairness; dealing uprightly with others. Disraeli said, “Justice is truth in action.”

And what is Truth? Of its power we read in John: “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” In the Apocrypha: “Great is truth, and mighty above all

things.” And Keats: “Beauty’s truth, truth beauty – that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.” And Shakespeare: “To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

It’s a big order – “A just comprehension of and adherence to the qualities of Faith, Love, Purity, Justice, and Truth.” It is subjugating the human to the divine. How to translate it into action is of first importance. Perhaps the human footsteps would include the replacing of thoughtlessness with thoughtfulness, impatience with patience, unkindness with kindness, and destructive criticism with understanding. Someone has said that criticism is one’s public admission of his inability to see the Christ.

Adherence to these qualities demands companionship with right thoughts about all. It necessitates refusing thought room to all else. It doesn’t make us Pollyannas, for we are not condoning wrong. We are impersonalizing evil. To live in that spirit helps us to live up to our better selves and to help others to do so.

Ella Syfers Schenck has written a poem called “Morning Prayer” which says very simply and very beautifully what I am trying to say. I shall read it to you:

Lord, in the quiet of this morning hour
 I come to Thee for peace, for wisdom, power
 To view the world today through love-filled eyes;
 Be patient, understanding, gentle, wise;
 To see beyond what seems to be and know
 Thy children as Thou knowest them; and so
 Naught but the good in anyone behold;
 Make deaf my ears to slander that is told;
 Silence my tongue to aught that is unkind;
 Let only thoughts that bless dwell in my mind.
 Let me so kindly be, so full of cheer,
 That all I meet may feel Thy presence near.
 O clothe me in Thy beauty, this I pray,
 Let me reveal Thee, Lord, through all the day.”

Let us stop and evaluate our thoughts about others. J.R. Ashmore has written about this in his poem, “I Know Something Good About You.”

Wouldn’t this old world be better
 If the folks we meet would say,
 “I know something good about you!”
 And then treat us just that way?

Wouldn’t it be fine and dandy,
 If each handclasp warm and true
 Carried with it this assurance,
 ”I know something good about you!”

Wouldn't life be lots more happy,
 If the good that's in us all
 Were the only thing about us
 That folks bothered to recall?

Wouldn't life be lots more happy,
 If we praised the good we see?
 For there's such a lot of goodness
 In the worst of you and me.

Wouldn't it be nice to practice
 That fine way of thinking, too?
 You know something good about me!
 I know something good about you?

The little book, Henry Drummond's The Greatest Thing in the World, is a sermon preached many years ago in which Mr. Drummond used the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians as his text. It isn't fair to dip into it as I am going to do, for it is all so fine. The selections I am going to read are taken from his discussion of Paul's analysis of love: "Paul, in three verses, very short, gives us an amazing analysis of what Love is. I ask you to look at it. It is a compound thing, he tells us. It is like light. As you have seen a man of science take a beam of light and pass it through a crystal prism, as you have seen it come out on the other side of the prism broken up into its component colors – red, and blue, and yellow, and violet, and orange, and all the colors of the rainbow – so Paul passes this thing, Love, through the magnificent prism of his inspired intellect, and it comes out on the other side broken up into its elements. And in these few words we have what one might call the Spectrum of Love, the analysis of Love. Will you observe what its elements are? Will you notice that they have common names; that they are virtues which we hear about every day; that they are things which can be practiced by every man in every place in life; and how, by a multitude of small things and ordinary virtues, the supreme good is made up.

The Spectrum of Love has nine ingredients:

Patience "Love suffereth long."
 Kindness "And is kind."
 Generosity "Love envieth not."
 Humility "Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."
 Courtesy "Doth not behave itself unseemly."
 Unselfishness "Seeketh not her own."
 Good temper "Is not easily provoked."
 Guilelessness "Thinketh no evil."
 Sincerity "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

Patience; kindness; generosity; humility; courtesy; unselfishness; good temper; guilelessness; sincerity – these make up the supreme gift, the stature of the perfect man.

There is no time to do more than make a passing note upon each of these ingredients. Love is Patience. This is the normal attitude of Love; Love passive.

Kindness. Love active. I wonder why it is that we are not all kinder than we are? How much the world needs it. How easily it is done. How instantaneously it acts. How infallibly it is remembered. How superabundantly it pays itself back - for there is no debtor in the world so honorable, so superbly honorable, as Love. "Love never failith." Love is success, Love is happiness, Love is life. "Love I say," with Browning, "is energy of life." Where Love is, God is. He that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God. God is Love. Therefore Love. Without distinction, without calculation, without procrastination, love. Lavish it upon the poor, where it is very easy; especially upon the rich, who often need it most; most of all upon our equals, where it is very difficult, and for whom perhaps we each do least of all. There is a difference between trying to please and giving pleasure. Give pleasure. Lose no chance of giving pleasure. For that is the ceaseless and anonymous triumph of a truly loving spirit. "I shall pass through this world but once. Any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

Generosity. "Love envieth not."

Humility – to put a seal upon your lips and forget what you have done. After you have been kind, after Love has stolen forth into the world and done its beautiful work, go back into the shade again and say nothing about it. Love hides even from itself. Love waives even self-satisfaction. "Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."

The fifth ingredient is Courtesy. This is Love in society, Love in relation to etiquette. "Love doth not behave itself unseemly." Politeness has been defined as love in trifles. Courtesy is said to be love in little things. And the one secret of politeness is to love. Love cannot behave itself unseemly.

Unselfishness. "Love seeketh not her own."

Good Temper. "Love is not easily provoked." Nothing could be more striking than to find this here. We are inclined to look upon bad temper as a very harmless weakness. We speak of it as a mere infirmity of nature, a family failing, a matter of temperament, not a thing to take into very serious account in estimating a man's character. And yet here, right in the heart of this analysis of love, it finds a place; and the Bible again and again returns to condemn it as one of the most destructive elements in human nature.

Guilelessness and Sincerity may be dismissed almost with a word. You will find, if you think for a moment, that the people who influence you are people who believe in you. In an atmosphere of suspicion men shrivel up; but in that atmosphere they expand, and find encouragement and educative fellowship. It is a wonderful thing that here and there in this hard, uncharitable world there should still be left a few rare souls who think no evil. This is the great unworldliness. Love "Thinketh no evil," imputes no motive, sees the bright side, puts the best construction on every action. What a delightful state of mind to live in! What a stimulus and benediction even to meet with it for a day! To be trusted is to be saved. And if we try to influence or elevate others, we shall soon see that success is in proportion to their belief of our belief in them.

Sincerity includes the self-restraint which refuses to make capital out of others' faults; the charity which delights not in exposing the weakness of others, but "covereth all things"; the sincerity of purpose which endeavors to see things as they are, and rejoices to find them better than suspicion feared.

So much for the analysis of Love. Now the business of our lives is to have these things fitted into our characters. That is the supreme work to which we need to address ourselves in this world, to learn Love. Is life not full of opportunities for learning Love? Every man and woman every day has a thousand of them. The world is not a playground; it is a schoolroom. Life is not a holiday, but an education. And the one eternal lesson for us all is how better we can love. What makes a man a good cricketer? Practice. What makes a man a good artist, a good musician? Practice. What makes a man a good linguist, a good stenographer? Practice. What makes a man a good man? Practice. Nothing else.

Now just one more! I don't know who wrote this selection, "Two Friendly Bears." Anyway, these two fellows would make good companions for us BU girls.

Two Friendly Bears

One day I met two pleasant bears and I was glad to see
 They were inclined to be polite and make a friend of me.
 I had a heavy heart that day – a very awkward pack
 Of cares and aches and worries, too, that nearly broke my back.
 "Oh, let me help you," one bear said; "I am a stalwart bear.
 No aches or worries bother me; I make light work of care."
 Then, that one bear relieved me of my very trying load.
 And off he trotted happily along life's dusty road.

Another day I met those bears, and I was glad to see
 They recognized their roadside friend and grunted cheerily.
 I had a heavy heart that day, for anger's poisoned sting
 Had entered deeply into it and shadowed everything.
 Then said the other bear to me: "I'd like to see you smile.
 And hear a gentle word or so as we two walk awhile."
 So down the dusty road we went; o'er long I could not find

A sign of that old, angry heart; 'twas miles and miles behind.

What luck – I met those bears again; I had been traveling far;
But there they were and up I spoke: “Pray tell me who you are!”
One said: “My name is simple , ‘BEAR’; I never had another;
The other bear you see with me is my beloved brother.”
“And your name, Sir, I’d like to know, for you have served me, too.
I’ve never met such pleasant bears; or happy bears as you.”
Then said the other Bear to me: “I’m called ‘FORBEAR’ by others,
So you will see BEAR and FORBEAR are simply loving brothers.”

By Mabel Haynes, BU