

WHO CARES?

A QUESTION FOR 1874.

BY

E. M. S.,

*Author of "History of a Pin," and
"House to House."*

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ANDREW ELLIOT, 17 PRINCES STREET.

1874.

'Tis a very good world to live in,
To lend, or to spend, or to give in ;
But to beg or to borrow,
Or ask for one's own,
'Tis the very worst world
That ever was known.

WHO CARES?

VERY few people pass through this world of trouble and sorrow without at some time or other requiring human help and sympathy. They may in some cases be too stupefied to be aware of the fact; in others, too proud to admit the need is not lessened thereby. In most instances, help is eagerly sought for, and sympathy welcome, when and where it can be found. How strange, then, that so many (for

the time being) happy, healthy, and prosperous. Some people so manage to close their eyes and ears to the sufferings of those around them (regardless alike of their own past trials, and those yet possible in the future), that the wide side of the Road of Life is strewn with hundreds and thousands of wounded, dying creatures, left to perish for the want of a *little* help, a *little* comfort. They cry earnestly sometimes, but more often keep silence, for the cry is vain. It does not reach the ears of the hurrying multitude, composed alike of the avowedly worldly, and those calling themselves Christians, who pass by, intent each on his own gain, pleasure, or—Religion, as did the priest and Levite of old.

Who practically say, "We have enough to do with what is more convenient, and pleases us better. Not a minute to spare. It is no business

of ours. What does it matter? Who cares?" and so they hasten away to make up for lost time.

After all, what *does* it matter? Only a few hearts broken, more or less,—a few sufferers left to die,—a few more lonely men and women worn out and sinking beneath heavy burdens of grief and sorrow.

Who cares?

You will say this is exaggerated. Unfortunately it is too true. If you doubt it, the next time you are in trouble, even great distress, because of change of circumstances, loss of friends, sickness, or anything else, ask help from any one—which would probably involve only a *little* trouble—and you will speedily discover how utterly impossible it is for him or her to bestow it. How many excellent reasons there

are for withholding it. At best, how many objections must first be overcome; in short, how very rare it is to meet with *anything* but complete and heartless indifference. Not that your friend will doubt your need, or that he will confess to being guilty of wanton cruelty; probably is only anxious to escape trouble. The real reason being, that so few care for anything which does not immediately concern their own selfish interest, still less for anything, which, in slang phrase, "bores them."

I am not speaking now of the innumerable societies and organisations which exist for the relief of every known or imaginable kind of distress. No doubt these do a great and permanent work, and God will bless all wise and generous hearts who planned and carry them out. But the waste of lives, health, and happi-

ness (dare we say the shipwreck of souls?) owing to the failure of brotherly kindness, to which I would now draw your attention, lies beyond *their* reach, and is very near to every one of us. No society or committee will ever reach one single human being among the poor. No formal words of encouragement or advice can supply the need of the rich. Help must come from hand to hand, sympathy from heart to heart.

Ay, *that* is the difficulty! For the hand which ought to be ready to help is often so unwilling. The heart we expected to be warm and tender, might be made of stone, so cold and hard is it.

Professing Christians are to be heard thanking God (even in consequence of His present mercies to them), that they are not, or rather *deserve* not, as other men. So did Job's friends. So

(possibly) did those who allowed the poor cripple to lie for thirty-eight long years by the pool of Bethesda, without any one of the crowd caring enough for him to help him to the healing waters? Perhaps we need not wonder. Human nature is much the same in all ages. Those untouched by the trial are at ease. They feel no pain. They are under no anxiety about to-morrow's providing. Theirs is a cheerful home, with no recent blanks. What does it matter, that, all around, pressing very painfully close to them, there is anxiety and poverty, suffering and death?

Have these no claim?

In *theory*, no doubt, most people are ready to admit it to the full. Therefore, supposing a case of necessity, let us proceed to practice, and again ask for real *personal* help. Our friends listen

(perhaps?) to the sad story; relieve their feelings by saying "poor things!"—possibly add a few tears; if the sufferer be destitute, even a few shillings. But go away: if *not* "bored," pleased to have been a little excited,—*interested* in the proper word—are wonderfully unconcerned the next moment—eat as hearty a dinner, and sleep as soundly as if there were no sorrow or trouble in the world. The only answer to the appeal being, the mocking echo—

WHO CARES?

That is the burden of the night wind's song, as you hear its plaintive music among the trees, sighing and moaning before it brings those soothing showers, called by a little child "Tears of the angels, for the sins (and sorrows) of the world." It sounds more loudly in the fierce gale, while it lashes the sea beneath it

into fury, which re-echoes the cry as it sobs and dashes itself upon the rocks, so like a creature in distress. You may hear it any night when you lie awake in winter. When you do, pray for those at sea.

These voices of the elements seem to me only the audible expression of a great wail of human agony, sent up from swelling, bursting hearts which the night winds gather in going round and round the earth, and carry it up and away till it reach the throne of the Lord of Sabaoth. Blessed be His name; "His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, nor His hand shortened that it cannot save."

Yes, when all else has failed, *there is still*

ONE WHO CARES.

GOD THE FATHER <i>cares</i>	Ps. xiv. 2, 3.
<i>for all!</i> for He so loved	Ps. cii. 19, 20.
us sinful, selfish, weary	Rom. viii. 32.
the world, that He sent His	John iii. 16, 17.
Son to save it.	1 John iv. 9, 10
God the Son spent His	Mat. xii. 18, 21, viii. 17.
life on earth in caring	Luke iv. 18, 19.
<i>for all who would let</i>	John v. 40.
<i>Him</i> , and laid it down	Matt. xiii. 58.
<i>for all</i> : even for those	John x. 11-18.
who have never cared for	1 Tim. i. 15.
Him.	Ps. lxxviii. 18.
God the Holy Ghost	
<i>cares for all</i> , as His name,	
"The Comforter," implies,	John xiv. 16-18.
and so, is specially near	
the desolate and distressed.	Isa. lvii. 15.

Ready to hear, and a very present help in trouble.

Yet, beware; it is possible to *grieve*, even to *quench* the Spirit of God, by *hardness of heart*, as well as by unbelief.

Listen to His words,—
“To him that is afflicted, pity *should* be shewed by his friend; *but* he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.”

“Shew my people their transgression; they seek me daily; they take delight in approaching to God; they *delight to know* my ways. Wherefore have

Ps. xxxiv. 6.

Nahum i. 7.

Eph. iv. 30-32.

1 Thess. v. 19.

Acts vii. 51, 52.

James ii. 13.

Job. vi. 14.

ye fasted, say they: and thou seest not? Behold the day of your fast ye had pleasure, and exact all your labours. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? Is not *this* the fast that I have chosen? To undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”

Isa. lviii. 1-7.

"What will ye do in the day of visitation? To whom will ye flee for help?" Isa. x. 3.

Hear what Christ says,—"Ye call me Master and Lord, *and ye say well*, for so I am: I then, *your* Lord and Master, have left you an example that ye should do *as* I have done to you." John xiii. 12-17.

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." Matt. xviii. 10, 14.

Hear what St Paul says,—"We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Rom. xv. 1.

if one member suffer, the members suffer with it." 1 Cor. xii. 26.

Hear what St John says,—"Whoso hath this brother have need, and seeth his brother's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and seeth up his bowels of compassion from him, *how* loveth the love of God in him?" 1 John iii. 17.

and if it be true that want of feeling is not a sign of the health of the body, surely it must be a dangerous symptom of the life of the soul!

Can that be *real* religion which feels nothing for those for whom the Saviour died? or has it nothing but coldness and indifference to offer

those whom He specially condescends to love and cherish! Hear again the words of Jesus Christ, in that awful picture of the Last Judgment, drawn by the loving Saviour Himself, "Inasmuch as ye did it *not* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me." Matt. xxv. 45; Heb. ii. 11-17.

Notice, I pray you—Those on the left hand were not charged with any great crime, or with hatred to Christ Himself; on the contrary, they can excuse themselves from the guilt of having *directly* dishonoured Him. Their sin was heartlessness. They had seen want and suffering all around. We are not told that they inflicted it, still less that they deliberately increased it. They *only did not* what God and humanity required them to have done. They simply *did not care*.

Remember, we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. What account have we to give? Men and women, harden not your hearts. Despise not the word of the Lord, nor those poor brothers and sisters whom He has given you, with the privilege to love and help them. Let us read part of the 10th chapter of Luke, from the 25th to 37th verse, and remind ourselves of the duty to "Go and do likewise," if we can.

Yet, blessed be God; *there are some* who try to "bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." In so doing, they prove their relationship to their Father in heaven, by shewing mercy and kindness to His children on earth. Even in this nineteenth century, with its haste to be rich,—in many cases its doubts so engrossing of *what*, and *how*, and *how much* to believe,

that little time or energy is left for *doing* what is *plainly* commanded. In others, the hurry to *hear* as much and *talk* as much as possible, as if the soul were worked by steam pressure, and thus propelled along the narrow way, leaving little time for practical godliness, and less chance of a helping hand to weaker and slower travellers, or the wayfaring man, who must of necessity plod on, often sorely discouraged because of the way; though, being "fools in Christ," they are less likely to err therein. See Isa. xxxv. 1 Cor. iv. 10.

In the midst of all this, let us praise the Lord that there is *still* such a thing as love left on this old earth of ours! It grows in strange and unexpected, I had almost said in *queer* places, and when it is found, is too often slighted and trampled under foot. If it be your good fortune

to find it, do not throw it away. There is not much of it, either in the world or the Church. Let us therefore be careful of it, for it is a pleasant plant, and increases marvellously by cultivation. Get all the sun we can for it, and let it cost us a few tears to keep it fresh, they will do us no harm. It feeds upon little things, generally little thoughts, words, and deeds of kindness). Few have the privilege of bestowing larger gifts, therefore do not starve it. Great demands come seldom on any of us. If we have been earnest in fulfilling the *little* claims, we shall find ourselves equal to the greater when needful, without the terrible exertion we so much dreaded. I said that few had the privilege of bestowing large gifts. Surely it was a mistake? For may it not be that the humble, quiet life, which

is cheerfully yielded to God, day by day (because first bought by Him with the blood of Jesus and filled with love to men for His sake), may be found, "in the day when He reckons up His jewels," to be of more value and larger blessing than all the gifts, out of the abundance of wealth and talent, poured into the treasury, of the temple of religion, science, and civilisation.

Such lives are *here* really understood by few, possibly valued by none, probably ridiculed by many. But their reward is safe. God sees not as man seeth; and what is lightly esteemed among men is of great price in the sight of God. Most of us can call to mind one or two such; if they are still with us, value them more; if they are gone, work be done, and they have entered the rest of the people of God, try to follow their faith and patience with "the quiet wisdom which cometh

from the Lord,"—to be had for asking. *That* will be the best safeguard against our wish to help others degenerating into mere officious meddling, so odious in itself, and the *professed* of which is often made an excuse for standing aloof altogether, and ignoring the most sacred aims and obvious duty. Just in proportion as *real love exists and acts*, will there be the less room for gossiping presumption.

Nor, as has been well said (see a book on "Work," by M. M. Gordon) "need we leave the position where God *has* placed us, to seek work in another where He *has not* placed us." The work for brotherly kindness to do is thickly strewn all around us, if we will but ask God to teach us how to do it. We must indeed be isolated if, in the course of every day we do not meet some *one* person who *needs*, and would

(probably) be comforted by our sympathy, is in itself a serious "talent," for which we are accountable. In the same book I have also quoted, the writer says, "Have you ever thought that, as the Lord Jesus Christ looks upon the cup of cold water as given to Him, so He will look upon the wounded feeling, the repulse of confidence, the bruised spirit, as given to Him?"

Neither is the popular and convenient doctrine of supposition true, that those requiring help are usually poor in this world's gear. As we live, we find, alas! that often the most destitute of those things which sweeten life, do not live in cottages.

Nor need we fear to increase our own burden by giving freely what has been so freely bestowed upon us.

not an Egyptian Taskmaster, to allow does He not say, "Cast *thy* burden on Me, and He will sustain thee." "He that waters others shall be watered himself." "Cast *all* your care upon Him, for He careth for you." HOW MUCH HE CARES, HE ONLY knows, and will clearly shew you in the day of judgment. He shall wipe away all tears from off our faces. (Isa. xxv. 8; Rev. vii. 17). "Having loved, dearly beloved, these promises," we shall be encouraged to care for others, with the same ard set before us, of by and bye hearing the words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Yes, for me, for me He careth,
 With a brother's tender care ;
 Yes, with me, with me He shareth
 Every burden, every fear.

Yes, o'er me, o'er me He watcheth,
 Ceaseless watcheth night and day ;
 Yes, ev'n me, ev'n me He snatcheth
 From the perils of the way.

Yes, for me He standeth pleading
 At the mercy-seat above ;
 Ever for me interceding,
 Constant in untiring love.

Oh, might we all our lineage prove,
 Give, and forgive, do good, and love ;
 With soft endearments in kind strife,
 Lightening the load of daily life.

Then draw we nearer, day by day,
 Each to his brethren—all to God ;
 Let the world take us as she may,
 We need not fear to miss our road.
