

Do not read this
till you are quiet in
your own room

Newport

July 9. 1890

My dear Helen:

Mamma has told me

that you had asked her how you could
make yourself care for persons whom
you do not naturally love. The question
shows a recognition, on your part, of a
feature of your disposition which we
have noticed for some time, and
concerning which you had some advice.

In the first place, my dear child,
you must not allow yourself to be
worried about this trait of your charac-
ter, which renders you indifferent to

most persons, as though it were a
fault, or a sin, for which you are
originally responsible. It was born
in you, without your will. But when
it is not a fault, it is a very serious
defect, against which you are bound as
a Christian to strive, as earnestly as
you would against any other natural
defect, or weakness.

You will notice that indifference
to other people, the failure to be moved
by their happiness or sorrow, though
not as bad as hatred, or ill-will, to
them, is nevertheless as much opposed
to that charity, or love, which our
Lord and His Apostles dwell upon as

the great distinctive grace of the Christian Character. It is
well to note this. Like yourself, I am naturally indifferent &
others; and for many years I thought it almost something to be
proud of. I did not meddle with other people's business, which
is undoubtedly a good thing; unfortunately, in me it was due
to the fact that I did not care anything about their business,
whether it went well or ill. It is only very lately that I have
realized that it is not enough to refrain from, and keep
clear of, bad or unkind feelings towards others; Charity de-
mands that we have toward them feelings of kindly
interest; of sympathy; even of affection, in accordance
with the relationship which they bear to us, as relatives,
as friends, or as neighbors.

You have in your Aunt Rosie a very good ex-
ample of what this charity should be - in her affection
for her mother. You know how devoted it is. I have heard
her say that it is no merit in her to do all she does
for her mother ^{because she loves her so}; and in that she is quite right, it is no
merit in her. any more than your indifference is a fault
in you; it is a natural trait. But do you not see what
a lovely trait it is, and how far better we all would be

if we by nature loved others as Abin
loves his mother; not so much, of course,
in every case, but having for every
one a degree of interest and love
proportioned to their relationship to us.
That we have not, is because our nature
is fallen.

Now as to the means of gaining this
better nature, it is necessary to distin-
guish between your part and God's
part. Your part is to give care and
thought as to your loving duty to others,
and then to try earnestly and carry ~~them~~^{it}
out. First of all in your home; next
among your other relations; then extending

to others about you. For instance, at Ben
Habor, there is Frannie and MARRAINE. The
former can go about but little, and though
she has many friends, who either from
natural affection, or Christian kindness,
go to see ^{her}, yet every little visit is an
incident and a pleasure in her day. I know
that she has shown such a very marked
partiality for Lyle, that it is not to be
wondered at she has lost the affection
of her other grand children; but the evi-
dence of her love for you is not the
measure of your duty of kindness to
her. Go to see her frequently, and
not sparingly or of necessity; remem-
bering that God loves a cheerful

given. This is less hard than you may think; a moment of prayer and effort of the will will scatter all sense of inconvenience and reluctance.

But doing this, and such like things, though necessary, will not of themselves give you the spirit of love which you desire. They are external acts, though good acts; and are of the nature of those "works", of which St Paul says they cannot save us. They are done against our nature, which seeks its own welfare or pleasure rather than that of another person; whereas that which we are to desire is that change of heart, or change of nature, through which we will naturally and without effort do right and kind things. By our present nature we seek self; by our new nature we shall seek the good of others. Thus you may see the value of that assistance which I have used, of Rosie's love to her mother. Rosie doubtless dislikes some people, and is indifferent to many; but in one particular she affords a very beautiful example of what our redeemed and new nature will be. She does her kindnesses to her mother, not because she ought to, but because she loves her by nature; her acts of kindness therefore are not "works", but "fruits"; they spring naturally from what she is, and therefore, though not meritorious, they are evidences of a character

that in this particular is lovely.

Such a change of nature, from indifference to love like this, is beyond a man's power. Works we can do, but change our nature we cannot. This is God's part. He requires of us our will and wish, which if we have we will doubtless do works of love; but so what we will, He only can change the heart.

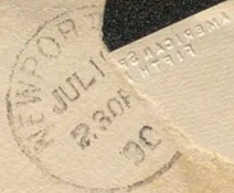
Therefore, to become what you wish, to have kindly interest in and sympathy with others, you must:
 1st do works of kindness; and 2^d.
 pray continually to God to change your

water in this respect and give you
a loving heart. It will take time,
but never despair of it. I believe you
do try not to have unkind feelings
towards others, but don't stop con-
tent with that; aim at having kind
interest in them.

Both your mother and I think
of you, my dear child, among your
present surroundings. Your friends
seem to be very kind and fond of
you; but we cannot be without some
apprehension, believing that they are
in their aims and principles entirely

worldly - living that is for this world, and not for the next.
It is not for me to judge them in this respect, but only to
caution you to be careful, and not allow yourself to
attach undue importance to, and care too much for, the
comforts and pleasures of this world. We are all too apt
to do this, but particularly when surrounded by them, as
you now are. The "deceits of the world", as the Litany calls
them, are very pleasant, particularly in youth; but the
deceit is there, for they are found on experience to be
unsatisfying in the end. Yet the strange thing is that
even those who have by experience found their hollowness,
and even talk of their emptiness, still cling to them
by force of habit. I trust you may escape their taking
such hold upon you. Remember that life is not only
uncertain, but that it is short. You may or may not
have a life of average length; but even if you live long - at
the longest, life is short; and long before its end pleasure
ceases to please. At the end, but one thing gives pleasure; and
that is a nation which, having been renewed by God, brings
forth those fruits which are pleasant here, love, joy,
peace, and which endure beyond the grave. Yours truly A. J. W.

Indifference towards
people-



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