

Thus Charles II
distinguished
themselves above all



Thus we find among the Roman emperors men who valued their immense power chiefly because it gave them the command of all the sensual pleasures that the countries of the known world could supply.

In modern history Henry VIII and Charles II distinguished themselves above all the other monarchs of England by their absorption in their own pleasures, and their utter disregard of the good of their subjects. Such selfishness is not confined to kings and emperors, but is to be found in every rank of society. All over the world we find the selfish taking an unfair share of everything, and trying their best to use others as means to the attainment of their pleasure. They seem to be quite blind to the fact that by their course of life they must infallibly sacrifice their general happiness for the sake of a limited number of not very valuable pleasures.

It is quite possible that a selfish man may by cunning or determination induce his friends and relations to sacrifice their interests to his. It sometimes happens that there is in a family a notoriously selfish person, who makes himself or herself intensely disagreeable if crossed in any way. Such disagreeable persons often get their own desires gratified at the expense of the more amiable members of the family, who are known to be unselfish and not expected to resent any wrong done to them. But in the long run they defeat their own object, and find that by exclusive attention to their own happiness they have deprived themselves of the highest and most permanent sources of happiness. Human beings are so constituted by nature that they cannot enjoy happiness worthy of the name without being in sympathy with their fellow-men. Therefore, the best way to be happy is to make others happy.

What Shakespeare says of mercy is equally true of other forms of benevolence. Every kind act is twice blessed, and blesses alike him that gives and him that takes. Of the first and more important part of this double blessing the selfish man entirely deprived by his ruling passion.

He is also in many cases rived to the lesser blessing of receiving kindness and assistance from his fellow-men. As shown above, he may occasionally advantages from those who cannot avoid coming into contact with him and fear to provoke his resentment. But such advantages being conferred without goodwill, add little to his happiness, and all who can do so will be inclined to avoid his society, and will prefer to show kindness to others, who being sympathetic and benevolent themselves seem to deserve kindness in return.