

the most occupied with the object of this affection; and, on that very account, the least occupied with the pleasure of its indulgence. And it is precisely the objective quality of these regards, which stamps upon compassion the character of a disinterested affection. He surely is the most compassionate whose thoughts and feelings are most drawn away to the sufferer, and most drawn away from self; or, in other words, most taken up with the direct consideration of him who is the object of this affection, and least taken up with the reflex consideration of the pleasure that he himself has in the indulgence of it. Yet this prevents not the pleasure from being actually felt; and felt, too, in very proportion to the intensity of the compassion; or, in other words, more felt the less it has been thought of at the time, or the less it has been pursued for its own sake. It seems unavoidable in every affection, that, the more a thing is loved, the greater must be the pleasure of indulging the love of it: yet it is equally unavoidable, that the greater in that case will be our aim towards the object of the affection, and the less will be our aim towards the pleasure which accompanies its gratification. And thus, to one who reflects profoundly and carefully on these things, it is no paradox that he who has had doubly greater enjoyment than another in the exercise of compassion, is doubly the more disinterested of the two; that he has had the most pleasure in this affection who has been the least careful to please himself with the indulgence of it; that he whose virtuous desires, as being the strongest, have in their gratification