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CHAPTER II

THE CHOLERIC TEMPERAMENT ¹

I. CHARACTER OF THE CHOLERIC TEMPERAMENT

The choleric person is quickly and vehemently excited by any and every influence. Immediately the reaction sets in and the impression remains a long time.

The choleric man is a man of enthusiasm; he is not satisfied with the ordinary, but aspires after great and lofty things. He craves for great success in temporal affairs; he seeks large fortunes, a vast business, an elegant home, a distinguished reputation or a predominant position. He aspires to the highest also in matters spiritual; he is swayed with a consuming fire for holiness; he is filled with a yearning desire to make great sacrifices for God and his neighbor, to lead many souls to heaven.

The natural virtue of the choleric is ambition; his desire to excel and succeed despises the little and vulgar, and aspires to the noble and heroic. In his aspiration for great things the choleric is supported by:

1. **A keen intellect.** The choleric person is not always, but usually endowed with considerable intelligence. He is a man of reason while his imagination and his emotions are poor and stunted.

It is said that Julius Caesar was able to dictate different letters to several secretaries at the same time without losing the line of thought for each dictation.

2. **A strong will.** He is not frightened by difficulties, but in case of obstacles shows his energy so much the more and perseveres also under great difficulties until he has reached his goal. Pusillanimity or despondency the choleric does not know.

If in the following treatise it is said: the choleric or the sanguine person acts thus or thus, it does not mean that he must act thus, or that he acts thus always, but that he usually acts in this manner or has a strong tendency to act in this manner.

CHAPTER III

THE SANGUINE TEMPERAMENT

I. CHARACTER OF THE SANGUINE TEMPERAMENT

The sanguine person is quickly aroused and vehemently excited by whatever influences him. The reaction follows immediately, but the impression lasts but a short time. Consequently the remembrance of the impression does not easily cause new excitement.

II. FUNDAMENTAL DISPOSITION

1. **Superficiality.** The sanguine person does not penetrate the depth, the essence of things; he does not embrace the whole, but is satisfied with the superficial and with a part of the whole. Before he has mastered one subject, his interest relaxes because new impressions have already captured his attention. He loves light work which attracts attention, where there is no need of deep thought, or great effort. To be sure, it is hard to convince a sanguine person that he is superficial; on the contrary, he imagines that he has grasped the subject wholly and perfectly.

2. **Instability.** Because the impressions made upon a sanguine person do not last, they are easily followed by others. The consequence is a great instability which must be taken into account by anyone who deals with such persons, if he does not wish to be disappointed.

St. Peter assured our Lord that he was ready to go with Him, even die for Him, only to deny a few hours later that he did even know "this man."

The crowds hailed our Lord with their Hosannas on Palm Sunday but cried: Crucify Him! a few days later.

The sanguine is always changing in his moods; he can quickly pass from tears to laughter and vice versa; he is fickle in his views; today he may defend what he vehemently opposed a week ago; he is unstable in his resolutions. If a new point of view presents itself he may readily upset the plans which he has made previously. This inconsistency often causes people to think that the sanguine

CHAPTER IV

THE MELANCHOLIC TEMPERAMENT

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MELANCHOLIC TEMPERAMENT

The melancholic person is but feebly excited by whatever acts upon him. The reaction is weak, but this feeble impression remains for a long time and by subsequent similar impressions grows stronger and at last excites the mind so vehemently that it is difficult to eradicate it.

Such impression may be compared to a post, which by repeated strokes is driven deeper and deeper into the ground, so that at last it is hardly possible to pull it out again. This propensity of the melancholic needs special attention. It serves as a key to solve the many riddles in his behavior.

II. FUNDAMENTAL DISPOSITION OF THE MELANCHOLIC

1. **Inclination to reflection.** The thinking of the melancholic easily turns into reflection. The thoughts of the melancholic are far-reaching. He dwells with pleasure upon the past and is preoccupied by occurrences of the long ago; he is penetrating; is not satisfied with the superficial, searches for the cause and correlation of things; seeks the laws which affect human life, the principles according to which man should act. His thoughts are of a wide range; he looks ahead into the future; ascends to the eternal. The melancholic is of an extremely soft-hearted disposition. His very thoughts arouse his own sympathy and are accompanied by a mysterious longing. Often they stir him up profoundly, particularly religious reflections or plans which he cherishes; yet he hardly permits his fierce excitement to be noticed outwardly. The untrained melancholic is easily given to brooding and to day-dreaming.

2. **Love of retirement.** The melancholic does not feel at home among a crowd for any length of time; he loves silence and solitude. Being inclined to introspection he secludes himself from the crowds, forgets his environment, and makes poor use of his senses — eyes, ears, etc. In company he is often distracted, because he is absorbed by

CHAPTER V

THE PHLEGMATIC TEMPERAMENT

I. NATURE OF THE PHLEGMATIC TEMPERAMENT

The soul or mind of the phlegmatic person is only weakly or not at all touched by impressions. The reaction is feeble or entirely missing. Eventual impressions fade away very soon.

II. FUNDAMENTAL DISPOSITION OF THE PHLEGMATIC PERSON

1. He has very little interest in whatever goes on about him.
2. He has little inclination to work, but prefers repose and leisure. With him everything proceeds and develops slowly.

III. BRIGHT SIDE OF THE PHLEGMATIC TEMPERAMENT

1. The phlegmatic works slowly, but perseveringly, if his work does not require much thinking.
2. He is not easily exasperated either by offenses, or by failures or sufferings. He remains composed, thoughtful, deliberate, and has a cold, sober, and practical judgment.
3. He has no intense passions and does not demand much of life.

IV. DARK SIDE OF THE PHLEGMATIC TEMPERAMENT

1. He is very much inclined to ease, to eating and drinking; is lazy and neglects his duties.
2. He has no ambition, and does not aspire to lofty things, not even in his piety.

V. THE TRAINING OF PHLEGMATIC CHILDREN

The training of phlegmatic children is very difficult, because external influence has little effect upon them and internal personal motives are lacking. It is necessary to explain everything most minutely to them, and repeat it again and again, so that at least some impression may be made to last, and to accustom them by patience and charity to follow strictly a well-planned rule of life. The