

The ordinary man who has suffered injustice burns with a desire for revenge; and it has often been said that revenge is sweet. This is confirmed by the many sacrifices made merely for the sake of enjoying revenge, without any intention of making good the injury that one has suffered. The centaur Nessus utilised his last moments in devising an extremely clever revenge, and the fact that it was certain to be effective sweetened an otherwise bitter death. The same idea, presented in a more modern and plausible way, occurs in Bertolotti's novel, *Le due Sorelle* which has been translated into three languages. Walter Scott expresses mankind's proneness to revenge in words as powerful as they are true: "Vengeance is the sweetest morsel to the mouth that ever was cooked in hell!" I shall now attempt a psychological explanation of revenge. All the suffering that nature, chance, or fate have assigned to us does not, *ceteris paribus*, pain us so much as suffering which is brought upon us by the arbitrary will of another. This is due to the fact that we regard nature and fate as the original rulers of the world; we look upon what befalls us, through them, as something that might have befallen every one else. Therefore in a case of suffering which arises from this source, we bemoan the fate of mankind in general more than we do our own. On the other hand, suffering inflicted on us through the arbitrary will of another is a peculiarly bitter addition to the pain or injury caused, as it involves the consciousness of another's superiority, whether it be in strength or cunning, as opposed to our own weakness. If compensation is possible, it wipes out the injury; but that bitter addition, "I must submit to that from you," which often hurts more than the injury itself, is only to be neutralised by vengeance. For

by injuring the man who has injured us, whether it be by force or cunning, we show our superiority, and thereby annul the proof of his. This gives that satisfaction to the mind for which it has been thirsting. Accordingly, where there is much pride or vanity there will be a great desire for revenge. But as the fulfilment of every wish proves to be more or less a delusion, so is also the wish for revenge. The expected enjoyment is mostly embittered by pity; nay, gratified revenge will often lacerate the heart and torment the mind, for the motive which prompts the feeling of it is no longer active, and what is left is the testimony of our wickedness.