

LURES OF LIFE

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Title: Lures of Life

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Release Date: July 25, 2013 [eBook #43303]

Language: English

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Produced by Al Haines.

LURES OF LIFE

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T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD.
ADELPHI TERRACE, LONDON

First published January, 1919.
Second Impression June, 1919.

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LURES OF LIFE

I

THE LURE OF LIFE'S AFTERGLOW

A friend put me in remembrance that I had a birthday recently. Birthday emotion with an old man is an extinct crater. When I was young a coming birthday set my pulse throbbing to mad music weeks beforehand; it filled me with delightful anticipations. Romance gathered round the happy event. Our thoughts tripped capriciously along the primrose paths of the future. I felt myself preordained to greatness. The hoarded treasure held in bond for me was surely there awaiting delivery, and Time the magician's wand would wave its largesse into my outstretched eager hands, and, clothed in honour, I should ride prosperously all the days of my life.

To the youngster starting on the grand tour of life, the journey is a splendid venture. The cup held to the lips overflows with rich, ripe, sparkling liquor; every draught of it is nectar, exhilarating the spirits, expanding the experience, and discoursing music on every chord of the harp of a thousand strings. It is superb doing, riding life on a flowing tide when the warm south wind blows, and the air is redolent with aromatic spices, when driftwood floats from distant climes, and shore-birds sail in the central blue signalling that the Land of Heart's Desire will soon be reached. Truly youth takes life with a zest of its own.

Yes, the birthday is a happy day to the young. You rejoice that you are a year older and of added consequence and stature in the world of men, and a step nearer realizing the daydreams sweetly dreamed in school, when the magic of life filled you with wonder and awe. Birthday joy increases immensely until the period of ecstatic joy crowns all, when you score twenty-one years and write yourself down a man. You are no longer a flower in the bud worn in anybody's buttonhole, but a well-developed plant on your own root growing in the open. When you get twice twenty-one birthday joy cloys on your palate, and you begin to resent the intrusion of the natal day as an unwelcome guest that you have seen too often. He reminds you that you are growing old and growing older. Your friends may crown the day with roses and toast you at the evening dinner in your best champagne let loose for the occasion, but the obvious remains, and your response to their unblushing flattery is not gushing as of yore. You tire

of birthday greetings and birthday festivities; your vivacity flags; your digestion suffers. The thoughts that adorn the occasion are chiefly reminiscent, for the horizon of the future is narrowing down and leaves less space for Fancy in which to fly her kite.

When I had covered my half-century a curious feeling like an electric shock chased along every fibre of my being on facing the cold, hard fact for the first time; I had grown old, and done it surreptitiously. Time glides smoothly, silently, swiftly, and startled as from a deep sleep, one marvels at the hot haste of the rolling years. You dread nearing the vortex of the great unknown to which we all inevitably steer, and finally sink beneath its swirling surface. The outlook is disturbing. Can't you put down the brake and gentle the pace? Will no opiate drug Time into forgetfulness? You try the rejuvenating influences of Mrs. Allen's Hair Restorer, but nothing happens. The bald spot on the crown of your head increases in baldness and shining splendour. The longer you watch it, the larger it grows. Time baffles your artful devices, smiles at your wild alarms, and drives from you the crimson days of youth, with their vigour and vivacity, leaving in your possession a feeling of comfortable lethargy which solidifies into pacific blissfulness. Insensibly a change has passed over you with the mounting years. How the change wrought you do not know. Where you crossed the frontier which in the twinkling of an eye ranked you amongst the elders you cannot say. Who can tell the moment when summer ends and autumn commences? Who can cut a clean cleavage between afternoon and evening hours?

However, you settle down to an old man's pleasures. You dislike being hustled after dinner. You prefer a quiet rubber at Bridge in a cosy room, with shaded lights, and a silent cigar with cronies of a choice, familiar brand as playmates. You prefer it to strenuously dancing in a stuffy, glaring ball-room till morning hours chase the stale and weary dancers to their homes. It is too fatiguing an amusement to make pleasure for you, as there is no new romance to be looked for after fifty. Anticipation at your ripe age is wasted stimulant. Boys dream of the future, old men live in the present. Youth, once upon a time, was an asset held in hand, a rich inheritance to be proud of, but now the treasury of youth is spent to the last coin and only the empty coffer remains, a memento of the vanished wealth of early days. You are a middle-aged man aged fifty, and you settle down to it solidly and squarely and comfortably. You will never be young and flippant again this side the harbour-bar.

As we steer cautiously into the sixties and face the grand climacteric, life grows pensive. Sober reflections automatically cast their lengthening shadows over us. We have drunk copiously of the wine of life, and are now coming to the dregs of the bottle. We get moody. Meridian sunshine has not fructified the promise of youth as we appointed it. Lean years have eaten up years of

plenty. We have gathered tares with the wheat which brought disappointment into the storehouse. Varied experiences have chequered life with cross lights and shadows. The grand ideals of sanguine youth have dissolved like dreams at daybreak, and instead of the great achievement ours is the common lot. Rates and taxes are hardy annuals that flourish undisturbed amidst the ruins. Are we downhearted because the romance of life has fizzled out like spent fireworks and left us in darkness? We did not expect to finish up in obscurity. Are we downhearted? No; after the struggle and stress of conflict we get our second breath; and the calm of age overtakes us. The halcyon hours set in to cheer us. I now move airily along the line of least resistance, and this brings tranquillity of mind in my advancing years. We are no longer broody. Experience breaks one in gently to the monotony of daily routine, and the collar neither frets nor rubs the shoulder, for the velvet lining of contentment softens the friction and we trudge along serenely going West.

Everything contributes to make an old man's lot happy if the salt of life has not lost its savour. We have played the game, and now we watch others take their innings. It is good fun to watch. I tell you it is music to the eye watching the gay young world go its own way. The swagger, the *bravoure*, the buoyancy of its manners, stagger the dull parental mind. There is rhythm in its movements, there is character in its gaiety. It tops the record of the far-off days of splendour when we, their portly ancestors, were down in the arena beating up the dust of conflict, and considered ourselves the cream of modernity and the finest goods in the market. The youth of to-day has its hand on the wheel and the joy-car pads merrily, heedless of speed limits, for time has no limit and life sings a pleasant song to boys of the new régime.

Life's afterglow is the period when the past is viewed through the golden haze of memory and we live over again the days of our youth, the splendid days of hope and promise. Pleasant things and pleasant people are remembered, and disagreeable events that vexed us are forgotten. We wipe clean from the slate memories that are unwelcome. From the mellow distance we admire the picture in its broad outlines; its uninteresting details drop out of sight. It is the vivid patches of colour upon the canvas where the eye lingers lovingly and long. It is the happy past that enchants the memory to-day.

An old man glances over his shoulder adown the long pathway of receding years hungrily, and muses to himself, "Oh, to be out in the world again as I knew it fifty years ago, with the same sunny people about me; to meet them on the old familiar footing. We had capacious times together; we understood one another and loved one another with kindred hearts and flowing speech. I talk with people nowadays, but these new friends of mine are not responsive. There is a glass screen between us as we talk together; we sit near one another, but we are far

apart. I catch a far-off glint in their eye which holds me at arm's-length. Our lips are restrained, our thoughts are bottled up. It seems like sitting together in a room with blinds drawn, talking in the dark. Yes; new friends at best are but amiable strangers, for we met one another only when the flower of life had wilted and the leaf was sere and yellow on the tree. The full, unrestrained days when the sap was rising, the blossoming days of youth, were lived apart. I do not know these good people intimately, and I never can, and they can never know me. We each have a buried past which is sacred ground where the other never treads."

I met recently a grey-haired man who was a schoolboy friend of mine. A wide sundering gap of years lies between us since our previous meeting, but at once we grasped hands and knew each other intimately, although mid-life with each had been filled with a fulness the other knew nothing of. As boys we chummed together, and now we renewed our ancient friendship on olden lines. We had studied the same lessons, slept in the same dormitory, sculled in the same boat, fought in the same playground scimmages, and, having met again after long intervening years, we had endless youthful reminiscences in common to discuss and life-histories to relate. There was no need to sit on the safety-valve to throttle down the conversation. Talk came, a flowing stream bubbling up from the hot springs of the heart. Our meeting had the perfume of romance clinging to it, which made golden the precious hours in the spending. Two grey-haired men chattering with their heads together for the nonce were merry schoolboys. The present was forgotten; the past was everything to them while the old enthusiasms flared up brightly and shot a warm rosy afterglow athwart life's pleasant evening hour.

Loafing is a privilege of one's declining years. It is an agreeable form of laziness which sits well upon old shoulders. It is that mellow state of stagnant content which pervades the mind when the natural force abates. I do not extol it as a virtue, I claim it as a privilege. It helps to fill gaps in the daily round when business no longer engages your attention and office hours are a dread ordeal done with for ever. Having dropped out of the marching line and become a spectator of the passing show, what more natural than that you manifest a livelier curiosity in other people's activities than in your own sluggish movements. I love to spend a sunny morning lingering on the old garden seat, chatting to a friend, or watching the energetic youngsters at play amongst the roses. I find it enjoyable to take my pitch on the pierhead with the gay summer crowd ambling along, passing and repassing my post of observation, and watch the pretty and well-accounted girls angling for admiration, and the budding men in spotless flannels flashing answering glances to catch the lasses' eyes; an endless conversation going on without voices whispering a word; they look at each other and laugh, and the incipient mystery of the thing slips into their blood.

I was once reluctant to relinquish youth. Its passions and pleasure made my life intensely joyous in a clean, healthy way. I resented the horrid fact that with encroaching years I was no longer able to wake the old thrill of existence by any of the old methods. The call came to me, but nature responded not to its alluring voice. The spent fires could not be rekindled; and in a tragic moment the truth stood uncovered in its stark nakedness: "I am growing old!" I had to readjust my bearings in life to meet the new situation. I found it better to walk in step with the years and melt into middle life with all the gentle conciliations of an easy mind than to clutch at the hem of the garment of departing youth and hold on frantically to a corpse; and so it came to pass youth, with its frank, jovial, devil-may-care lightheartedness, was surrendered ground, and I put on a splendid face, taking up a new position in the rear as an old fogy, a little moss-grown, but still alive, healthy, happy, and hearty.

II

THE LURE OF HAPPINESS

The joy of living is to grasp life in its fullness just as it comes to us clean and sweet from the hand of God; to eat the grapes that grow in our own vineyard; to feed on the honey captured from our own hives; and to bask in the sunshine blessing our own garden plot. Some people cannot do this. They were born sour and fail to ripen. They remind me of the Church of St. Lorenzo at Florence, built but never finished, and showing a dejected mien to the passer-by. They hold on to life timidly with cold and clammy hands, and smile with glum visage and call it all vanity and vexation of spirit. Happiness frets them like a lump of undigested pickle lying heavy on their chest; they want to throw it off and be at ease in their misery. They consider it wickedness to enjoy things—to wallow in sunshine. They say we ought to content ourselves with bare commodities needful for existence. The primitive man was happy. He had no shirt to wash, no taxes to pay, no barns to fill with plenty. We must be primitive to be happy. Deplete the wealthy of their wealth; sink society to a common ground-level (allow us boots to wear in this muddy climate, if you please), and then everyone will be healthy, happy, and poor. Stepping out of his well-appointed motor-car, the up-to-date man spurns the primitive craze and blazes forth, "Is thy servant a dog that he

should house in a kennel?" Surely civilization means creature comfort; everyone wants something larger than bare necessities to embellish life. The Creator rears us on finer lines than He raises cattle on the marshes. Year by year He lavishes before our eyes Nature's prodigal store of ornament. Every yard of hedgerow, "those liberal homes of unmarketable beauty," contradict the crank who would confine us to the needful.

The dusty utilitarian sees the world only as a crowded granary, a chattering marketplace in which to buy and sell and get gain. The Divine Artist enriches the picture by painting in exquisitely the flowering hawthorn and fragrant violets, and by tuning the throat of the skylark to rarest melody; and concurrently He attunes the soul of man, which thrills appreciation, and delights in these manifestations of Sovereign goodness. He not merely appeases the hunger of the human body, but feeds the rarer appetites of the human mind with radiant viands; and the more godlike in stature man grows, the more fully he appreciates God-given art and beauty flung like flowers across his pathway.

Everybody is happy in his own order. The history of many a man's life is the story of a soul's wandering in search of happiness. Some people are happy in their misery. Even when nursing their spleen they do it comfortably. They dilate on their grief with real zest of morbid enthusiasm that it flings a blazing cheerfulness over their cold grey lives. It sets them purring with sweet content when an auditor listens to their woeful outpourings. This is the cheapest form of happiness, and reflects an impoverished mind thrown back upon itself.

Hazlitt, the essayist, gently prods these crazy egoists with a sharp pen and says, "Pure pleasures are in their judgment cloying and insipid; an ounce of sour is worth a pound of sweet." Farquhar, the lively dramatist, mocks their folly when portraying the gushing Lady Constance, who, on finding the miniature of her absent lover lying on the floor, picks it up and exclaims: "Now I am fitted out for sorrow. With this I'll sigh, with this converse, gaze on his image till I grow blind with weeping. It is the only thing could give me joy, because it will increase my grief."

Happiness is a gift of temperament. The occupation that makes one man happy the day long would be capital punishment to another man. I have known people to possess everything and enjoy nothing; others, who possess little, dwell in paradise. It is a braver thing to extract honey from the hive of life than to leave it rotting in the comb. Alas! these weak-kneed, nervous mortals who are afraid of being too happy: they tremble as they sit at the banquet. They toy with a lean and hungry fate and dare not clasp a full-bosomed blessing. They prefer misery as a diet, with a spice of religion thrown in to flavour it. They fancy self-inflicted misery is a virtue to be cultivated, and a grace to be counted for righteousness. We shrewdly detect in such conduct a pose. It lacks the grace of

sincerity. Such people, overfed on misery, fatten on it incontinently. It is the diet of a low, melancholy temperament.

There is no standard-pattern happiness planned to suit the temperament of everybody like the map of a city which all travellers follow to find their bearings. Happiness is a city that each person maps out for himself; its highways and byways are of his own engineering and grow to match his own requirements. Happiness is not a sloppy garment like a ready-made coat that you buy in a store. Happiness must be made to fit. In fact, every man makes his own happiness.

We all distil pleasure out of life in our peculiar way. Only our ways differ as the poles asunder. One man cannot understand where the other man's relish for life comes in. What is nauseous as bitter herbs in one mouth tastes delicate as the wines of Orvieto on another palate. A famous American millionaire found greater satisfaction in the simple pleasure of attending funerals than in all the superb luxuries which his millions brought him. We do not envy his simple pleasure. It was an innocent method of enjoyment peculiarly his own.

I knew a man who made an income of over £10,000 a year by hard work, and his pleasure was immense in doing it. One half of his relaxation in life was making more income, and the other half his amusement consisted in lecturing people on the evil of extravagance if they spent "tuppence" on a bus fare instead of walking three-pennyworth of leather off the soles of their boots. He never spent "tuppence" himself if he could save it. He drove life at high pressure, and enjoyed the sensations of a quick run. People called him a money-making machine devoid of fine feeling. People made a mistake. His nature was highly strung. He was keenly sensitive to pleasure—the pleasure of money-making. It was the poetry, the luxury, the fine art of life all rolled into one, and it quickened the gay emotions within him that seeing a good play, hearing an eloquent sermon or driving a spanking four-in-hand to Ascot on a fine June morning, excites in other people. There are various buttons to press, but they all send the same thrill of earthly pleasure tingling through the human frame. Different hands strike the same chords on the harp of life, and they tremble into song.

Some heroically minded people assert there are only two things in life: duty and happiness. It is not everybody who wants to do his duty—that is a special gift of Providence few enjoy. But everyone wants to be happy, and happiness is the greatest thing of all: other people's happiness as well as our own. We are not all sagacious to discern the angel of duty when she comes mixed in a promiscuous assembly of spirits less honourable than she. They all dress becomingly and smile bewitchingly that you cannot mark her down; her radiance shines no brighter than other luminous spirits that accompany her. We should try the spirits whether they be good or evil ones. However, they move first, and try us with their beauty, their flattery, and their gilded promises. According to the gospel of

St. Robert Louis Stevenson, there is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy.

A third thing some people suggest makes life worth living is experience. Experience, they maintain, is a more valuable treasure than happiness; experience is a pearl of great price, and we must sell all we have to possess it. The world is spacious; range it widely, breathe its bracing airs, sail its deep seas in search of experience. Pursue it, and if in the pursuit you are blown about by the fickle winds of fate, the buffeting may be disagreeable, but it is most exhilarating and healthy to the earnest seeker after experience. Provided you are blown, and blown violently, the direction of the gale matters not; the north-easter and the zephyr both teach. Experience builds up character and increases knowledge, though during building operations your wisdom may remain a stationary virtue. If you come out of the conflict with only experience to your credit at the other end of the struggle be thankful. Life is very good. Its chief spoils may be anguish and sorrow, yet experience makes it full and rich.

The logic of this cold philosophy needs consideration before adopting it as gospel. If a dented shield and a broken sword are the only spoils you bring home from the wars and hang up in the family parlour as trophies of victory, it is not an adequate recompense for the rich and vital experience gained in the fight. Experience was what Don Quixote in the slippers comfort of his home hungered after. It was what he found on his travels, and after passing through much tribulation it was the one prize he brought home with him at the journey's end. Experience many an ambitious man has found to be as an empty goblet to his thirsty lips.

When the Creator was busy in the minting-house He did not cast his creatures all in the same mould, or coin them of the same metal. Some people are of fine temperament, cram full of emotion; they are all feeling, and express their feeling vigorously. Other people are of baser metal. They are stolid, and pass through life neither contented nor discontented with their lot; they are neither happy nor miserable. They are well-regulated clocks running slowly down to the last tick, and then ceasing to tick at all. Monotony is the bane of their existence, blighting it with double dullness. They feel little and say nothing about it. One never knows what hidden compensations life provides for its multitudinous offspring. These torpid people must have a secret well of satisfaction from which they dip refreshing draughts in thirsty moments.

The child of emotion is more vivacious; he has colour, romance, movement. He is of a rarer vintage; there is sparkle in the wine of life. Occasionally the wine turns sour and drops flavour. Disagreeable people do exist for some veiled purpose of Providence, as the species never becomes extinct in the land. In infancy they were rocked in the cradle of discontent, and they have seldom slept out of

it since. They have grown up in a nursery of their own. They are highly strung, and have a genius for living in the moment—irritably. Their wit is brilliant, it scintillates like running water in the sunshine, but it cuts like a razor. Everybody within reach of their tongue, even innocent people, feel the whip of their capricious temper. I suppose some grim pleasure feeds their fiery nature when they subdue friend and enemy under them. It is an unenviable pleasure which they enjoy; nobody shares with them, and when their ill-humour dies down it must leave a nasty taste in their mouth.

If you want to be happy, do not expect too much from life. Do not ask more from friendship than you give, for eventually the balance is sure to adjust itself. Do not ask more than your share of good things; if you do exceed the limit, disappointment will dog your footsteps all the day. You cannot expect to be always happy. Trouble and sorrow come to all of us, with a difference. Some people extract comfort out of trouble, and it assuages their grief; others add worry to their woe, and it aggravates their vexation of spirit.

Motor-cars carry a little dynamo on board and generate their own electric current as they travel, and after dark, with the great headlights glowing, they travel pleasantly and safe. A contented mind is a dynamo we can carry with us, and it generates its own happiness as we travel. It illumines the journey of life and makes it pleasant to ourselves and agreeable to friends travelling in our company.

Do not grizzle over chances missed in life and "might have beens" which sprinkle your past like gravestones dotting a churchyard, inscribed "sacred to the memory of cherished griefs still hugged and spasmodically wept over." Convert the mossy tombstones into wayside shrines which loving hands garland with fresh flowers, while grateful hearts fondly linger there, recalling pleasant things and sweet companionship which gladdened your pilgrim way. Do not erect mural tablets to dead ambitions in the little sanctuary of your memory; build altars there instead whereon you can offer acceptable oblations of praise for evils escaped and for the crown of loving-kindness with which the Everlasting Arms encircle you.

If we only had the gift of humour on us it would make "life more amusing than we thought." Our eyes would open to a new world wherein kinder people dwell and where brighter sunshine warms the heart's red blood and chases down the gloom we anticipate to-morrow that may never come.

III

THE LURE OF SELF-DENIAL

Self-denial is not the highest form of virtue, nor is it a permanent condition of life for man to live in; yet it is a lure that draws men to martyrdoms as the flame collects moths to the burning. Man was not predestinated to a life of self-abnegation. Self-denial is a compromise between misery and happiness. Human nature does not thrive on compromise; it does not develop in austerities. Self-denial has its value in the scheme of moral education. Training is good for man if he does not carry it too far. You can overtrain. The scholar trains; he discreetly withdraws from gay life and inflicts on himself long hours of lonely study that he may rank in the list of University honours. The jockey trains, and punishes himself in so doing that he may ride to win. It is the same the world over: pain is joy in the making. Where self-denial is the driving power in religious life it leads, not to happiness, but to asceticism: to the lonely cell of the misanthropic monk, the pedestal of St. Simon Stylates, or the self-torture of the Indian fakir. Deluded people these, who build up life on self-denial as the pinnacle virtue to which man can soar while on earth. None of these people set self-denial in its proper place in the human economy—viz., a means to an end. It is the end-all in their vision of life, and so their life is dismal in the living and disappointing in its purpose.

Self-denial is necessary and serves a healthy purpose. It is necessary to man's spiritual welfare as medicine or the surgeon's knife may be necessary to his physical health.

Man is of twofold nature: the animal and the spiritual, the good and the bad, the superior and the inferior—label it as you please. Self-denial is putting the inferior quality under the superior one; self-denial is following the higher inspiration at the expense of the lower instincts. "Self-denial": the very word implies, repressing desires, renouncing pleasures, suffering pain. It means living from choice on the shady, dank side of the street rather than basking in the open sunny piazza when only a few steps place you there, where the children play and the old men foregather deep in the hallowed sunshine. Self-denial is not the crowning virtue—it is just the market price we pay that we may garner a harvest of happiness in the recompensing days of autumn.

The Divine purpose in man is growth, not repression of growth; it is to expand, to unfold, to develop character. To pass from bud to flower in moral and spiritual excellence, not to stunt manhood till its fairest features are arrested in growth, and moral atrophy sets up a canker in the bud, and ugliness usurps the seat of beauty in a man's character. Ugliness everywhere may be left to the

devil as his monopoly. Self-denial is the grubby chrysalis; happiness is the golden butterfly on the wing.

Not self-denial, but enjoyment, is the highest good and the truest test of character. Enjoyment; rejoicing in that which ought to delight us in this our earthly life—this is a finer attainment than self-denial. Enjoyment means a full life, living upon our whole nature, and well-balanced withal in the living. It seems an attractive and sinless programme to subscribe to, yet it is difficult to draw a boundary-line between enjoyment and excess. This is where the crux comes in. This is verily the fire that tries every man's work of what sort it is. It is cruel punishment to crush your passions and pleasures out of existence—that is self-denial. It is splendid discipline to give them play and at the same time hold them in control—that is enjoyment. Success in this great endeavour brings the victor into marching-line with the angels, and yields a finer exaltation and a larger recompense than trampling on the lilies.

It is more difficult to hold steadily a full cup than to carry an empty flagon. It is a doleful religion that uproots every flower in the garden as a noxious weed until only the naked brown earth remains to gaze upon in the blessed sunshine. It is a scurvy trick of virtue to spill the heady liquor on the ground and then with a flourish place the empty chalice an offering on the altar. Abstinence is the morality of the weak, temperance is the morality of the strong.

A deep enjoying nature is one of God's best gifts to man. The happy man is generally the best of his breed. The good are usually happy, and the happy are usually good. There are no short cuts to being happy, you must be really good to win through. If our daily occupation is congenial to our taste and disposition, our mind dwells at ease and our nature mellows in the sunshine of agreeable surroundings. Our sense of contentment radiates good humour and makes us kindly and benevolent to others. We are not chafed and fretted by duties irksome to us, because uncongenial. We are fulfilling destiny, and fulfilling it with completeness of purpose. Those around us feel the warm, penetrating sunshine of our hearts, and they grow warm under the mystic touch of the sun. It is for this reason that happiness becomes a holy quest with us, for out of it spring the virtues which robe life in beauty and gladness. One of the most precious of human faculties is the power to enjoy.

Self-denial is either a tyranny or a virtue, and should be praised with circumspection. Many feverishly religious people debase its moral currency. They hinder their own happiness and thwart the happiness of others as far as in them lies, and fancy in so doing they keep the whole ten commandments of God.

Self-denial for the sake of self-denial is a pagan rite: cold, pitiless, sterile. Renunciation and suffering prove nothing. Men have renounced and suffered for the greed of gold, for the lust of ambition, for the honour of a blood-stained

idol, and lost moral stamina in so doing. The experience of ages brands deep the flaming truth upon us that sacrifice must be valued according to the object for which the sacrifice is made. Sacrifice for its own sake weaves no crown of glory for the martyr's brow. It is a form of amiable suicide. If you starve yourself for the sake of showing mastery over self, what thank have ye? The heathen do even the same—and do it better. It is an act of self-torture, and ministers to your pride of purpose. But to give up a meal when hungry that one you love may have it puts a better complexion on the deed. To bear pain for the grim joy of bearing it brings no reward. Do not even the Stoics the same? But to bear pain rather than surrender truth or to cover a suffering friend is a loving and heroic act, meriting a V.C. when spiritual honours are distributed.

The old painters pictured in glowing witchery of colour the ordeal by suffering as the master-key that opened the gates of paradise to macerated mortals. The old writers drove home the same insidious error with all the pious fervour of their fluent pen, and thus men became fascinated with the doctrine of self-immolation as the highest good. In mediæval times the *via dolorosa* was the well-trodden public way travelled by sainted pilgrims seeking a better country.

Meritorious misery won through, for it was aureoled with the Church's benediction and rendered attractive by her promise of eternal rewards. Surely this daily human life of ours was not ordained to be a pageant of austerity reaching from the cradle to the grave. The Creator, having given this beautiful world as a temporary home for His children to dwell in, expects agreeable people to occupy its furnished splendours for a space of three score years and ten, more or less. If not, then the Creator's gift is wasted bounty flung to dull and unappreciative mortals.

Brighter and healthier views of life emerge out of the crude misconceptions which enveloped the past in religious gloom, although there yet remain amongst us people who revel in the luxury of self-denial as in a feast of fat things, while the genial side of their nature remains dormant, starved, stunted. I have seen such-like in the flesh, spoken with them and touched their cold hands. They are unattractive people to know, and not companionable to travel with. They are faultless, methodical, patient, but they have no endearing friendships, no entwining intimacies by which you can fasten on them and love them. They are isolated and self-contained, lacking the charm of some little human weakness which makes us all akin. They may have a warm heart, but chilled blood circulates round it. Their eyes glitter like glaciers at the call of duty. They hurry from committee meeting to committee meeting, and forget to lunch between engagements. They shine in the performance of self-imposed errands of mercy, and live by rule relentlessly at any cost to pocket, health, or reputation. They minister to the sick and poor assiduously, and mother a class of poor factory girls in the

evening, but their home is shivery to enter as a cold storage. A cold storage is a curious place to visit, but an impossible place to dwell in, except for frozen goods.

It is possible to make the best of both worlds without an uncomfortable sense of sin nagging you like toothache; it is possible to work for others and yet tend your own vineyard with whole-hearted joy garnered from the wonder and beauty and sunshine of this our earthly home. The man is not a miscreant who laughs heartily and often: the person is not a saint who starves his body to save his soul.

The harassing question is, How can we make the best of life as it comes to us a day at a time, and yet sail on an even keel? It is the problem that prophets, savants, and theologians have hammered at through the ages, but have not yet forged in fine gold the key that unlocks the mystery; thus there is an opening for us to cut in before the final word is uttered and the discussion battens down under a unanimous show of hands, which crowning mercy will be the last far-off result of time. The question agitating the moment is, What shall we do with the fair flower of our earthly life? Shall we enjoy it as we would the beauty and fragrance of a rose, thanking the good God for a gift so sweet and precious, or shall we with peevish fingers pick the rose to pieces petal by petal and crush it under foot, fearing its beauty may seduce our virtue and its perfume poison our soul?

Let us preserve the rose inviolate. Its role is to be joy-giver on the earth. I would sooner sit with Jesus Christ at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee and drink with Him wine of the best vintage that ever flowed on festive board than sup with John Baptist in the wilderness on his menu of locusts and wild honey. The exquisite scene my imagination quaintly pictures is Jesus Christ and John the Baptist sitting together at the banquet, and each enjoying the meal with equal zest.

The Renaissance which fascinated half Europe in the fifteenth century, like a carillon of joy-bells ringing through the land, stirring the dull pulses of the people and reviving generous and graceful ideals of life, was just open rebellion against the crabbed austerities of the Church, practised in the name of religion falsely so called. The people threw off the galling yoke of forced asceticism and found liberty of spirit and peace of mind in literature and art, and in the spontaneous and natural flow of healthy human life. Unfortunately, there was a fly in the amber; the people borrowed most of their new pleasures from pagan Greece, and the old Greek gods came tripping back from fairyland hand in glove with Greek culture, which was embarrassing.

The advent of the light-hearted Cavaliers in England, flinging colour and warmth and gaiety over the land, was a sharp recoil from the drab severity of Puritan rule. The Puritans were men of strong personality: half soldiers and

half preachers. They were honest without charm; strong-minded without pose; mighty in conscience, but mean in heart qualities. They were clean livers, but as they aged their visage grew hard and sour as unripe fruit, and their geniality of temper withered like a winter apple. They forgot to smile; the solemnities of life crushed them. They were grave and sagacious citizens lacking vivacity and humour, with plenty of flavour, but no sweetness. They dreamed of invisible kingdoms and fought for eternal verities. They command our admiration, but do not win our love. Their God was of the best theology mechanically constructed at Geneva by John Calvin, built up in parts composed of Righteousness, Justice, Holiness. Beauty was barred as a Divine attribute. The dismal meeting-house where they worshipped was the whitewashed prison in which the captured Deity dwelt. The burning light of this dread Presence enraptured the elect souls and intimidated the uncovenanted and graceless sinners, while the vast multitude of the nation held aloof, dreading contact with a religion so fierce and yet so gloomy, and they waited patiently through the shivering night of Roundhead rule, like watchmen on the city walls, for the coming of the king to set English homes once again humming with joy.

These two strong currents of life—Self-denial and Enjoyment—are flowing side by side in our midst to-day, dividing men in thought and purpose, driving men into open collision, only to relax their strangle-hold on one another to get firmer grip and fight again another day. These two different ideals of life represent two antagonistic sides of a man's nature that clash with each other, and the man has a stand-up fight with himself, which is an experience fiery temperaments often plunge into. Each side carries a half-truth and half an error. Blend the two half-truths into an intimate and harmonious whole and sink the errors into the bottomless pit from whence they came, and you discover human nature touching its highest and ripest form, approaching the Christlike in character, which combines the two elements in true and everlasting union.

Jesus of Nazareth, whose knightly character embodied all that the sweet romancists of the Middle Ages dreamed of and pictured in the faultless knight-errant of their day which won their hearts' devotion and consent (*preux chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*), and all that our own age typifies and holds dear in modern character of good repute when in a single phrase it proclaims the man a perfect gentleman—Jesus Christ means all that and more to us. Christ is not a withered flower on a broken stem torn from the Tree of Life; He is not a damaged idol of an effete civilization which modern progress sweeps aside in its forward march; He is not the Lord of an ancient faith whom the fires of scientific criticism have burnt up and left only His ashes in a cinerary urn reposing on the altar of our heart. He is the world's one fulfilment of the faultless and the ideal in human nature, blending all that is beautiful and enjoyable with all that is holy

and vigorous.

IV THE LURE OF MAGIC WORDS

Beautiful language is the flower of poetry. The magic of diction, of enchanted words transformed into radiant, marvellous sentient things pulsing with life and passion, capture our attention, and deep within us something vibrates in answer to their mastering call.

A writer with perfect felicity of expression voices thoughts and emotions of our own heart that we cannot give utterance to, yet of which we are dimly conscious. These ghostly creatures of our mind, half a memory and half a thing, peep and mutter within us; we try to hold them, but they are illusive as shadows on the wall. From the well-written words there leaps out something that has life and form and comeliness in it, and instantly we recognize an intimate returning from a far country laden with spoil. Words liberate the imprisoned thought that fretted within us and set it free: gloriously free for you and me and all the world to make familiar with.

There are words—spectacular words that print indelibly pleasant pictures on the mind, reveal in a sabre-flash thoughts that burn and things that were hidden. There are words—vivid, striking, portentous words that unfold noble vistas of truth in which happy, emancipated people walk freely in sunlight and song. There are melodious, aromatic words that ring tunefully through corridors of the mind like a carillon of merry bells charming the heart with far-reaching joy. There are strong, fiery, tempestuous words that crash and rattle and reverberate like rolling thunder through your being, and kindle the spirit of man into blazing passion and heroic fervour. There are dull, prosy, somnolent words that baffle like a London fog, envelop the writer's meaning in dense obscurity, and lure the reader's mentality into quagmires of perplexity and doubt.

There are ambrosial, honeyed, ornate words that regale us with fair visions of life, and steep the mind in dreams of romance and intoxicate with amorous delight. There are treacherous, lying words that distil murder in the air as they wing their evil flight. They strike deadly as a keen stiletto, or spit poison like a venomous adder in the grass.

There are discordant words that harrow up the feelings, and there are smooth, velvety, caressing words whose sweet sorcery holds us in their thrall, and that flow on and on harmoniously like the rippling of many waters that never fall out of tune.

Words cannot be measured with the measuring-reed of a man; they are spiritual forces; "they are angels of blessing or cursing. Unuttered we control them, uttered they control us." A man may have much wisdom packed into his capacious mind, but to unfold it attractively so that it glitters in the public eye and arrests attention is where the master art of handling words comes in.

One secret of successful writing is to express your thoughts in as few words as possible. Be frugal in your expenditure of words as a miser over the outlay of his hoarded gold. Write clearly, tersely, compactly, for words, like coins of the realm, are most esteemed when they contain large value in little space. The more briefly a thing is said, the more brilliantly it is put. The rarest of all qualities in a writer is—measure, saying exactly as much as you mean to say and not a word more or less. If a picture is complete, everything added is something taken away.

The "command of language" is often a snare of the devil into which men fall and do themselves grievous hurt. A redundancy of flowery words and empty fluency of speech confuse the thought and confound the meaning; skip half the telling and you know more of the tale. Oh the dreariness of some solid reading I have done in my time!—very learned and logical dissertations, but dulness crowned it all; even the dry bones of scientific matter clogged with technicalities can be made to live by a touch of style. Cartloads of words rumbling along the rutty road of argument slowly to their destination are not half so forceful as an apt image which flies straight to the point on wings of inspiration, and gets there first.

No subject is uninteresting if discoursed with an engaging pen, for words throw colour-magic on things that are common-place and give charm to them. I have watched Italian sunlight playing on the crumbling plaster walls of a peasant's cottage on the Tuscan hills, drenching them in opal and rose-carmine splendours, changing them into the image of a fairy palace. Words cast sunlight on commonplace, familiar things, flushing them with a radiance all their own, and so awaking our mind to see new beauties, or old beauties made manifest in a new light which had been staled by the lethargy of custom. Miss Mitford's village was an ordinary Berkshire village mute in the annals of English history, but it was surprised into fame by the romantic pen of its lady historian. A splendid accident of literary achievement adorned it with immortality, for it unfolds vividly before our wondering eyes the beauty of petty things and plain people in village life. The world owes to her genial pen a debt of gratitude; for it has won our sympathies, and in reading her book we can read our own village with interest

instead of boredom, and see for ourselves the beauty and pathos and comedy of common people and homely things around us.

Art is the gift of God to man. It is impossible to buy or barter for the possession of it. You may cultivate, improve, perfect the indwelling talent, but the Divine seed is sown mysteriously in the life of the child when brought to birth. In whom the secret power lies dormant none know until the appointed hour reveals its budding graces. Inscrutable is the Divine favour; none can tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. It is not inherited like gold or lands; it is not an entailed honour which accompanies the family title. Genius seldom, like an heirloom, passes from sire to son in direct succession.

A man may possess the advantages that education, training, culture give, yet all these excellent acquirements combined cannot manufacture an artist. It needs the live coal taken from off the altar to kindle the sacred flame which illumines the artist's soul.

The painter's art is subject to this very mysterious law. Philip Gilbert Hamerton describes the working of the artistic spirit in man. He says: "Painting is a pursuit in which thought, scholarship, information, go for little; whereas a strange, unaccountable talent working in obscure ways achieves the only results worth having. Here is a field in which neither birth nor condition is of any use, and wealth itself of exceeding little; here faculty alone avails, and a kind of faculty so subtle and peculiar, so difficult to estimate before years have been spent in developing it, or wasted in the vain attempt to develop where it does not exist."

There are pictures you and I dearly love, and they are priceless treasures in the market; yet there is no deep thought or display of learning in them to win our admiration. They violate facts of history, they outrage the grammar of academic art, and even their drawing may be inaccurate. Why, then, are such works cherished and treasured? Because, with all their faults, they have power, they have feeling; they speak to the heart. The men who painted them were unlearned and ignorant, but they were artists to the finger-tips. There is a spiritual something breathing beneath the surface of the true painter's work which leaps to the eye and draws upon us and bestirs our emotions. Other pictures—laboured, scholastic, monumental, they leave us cold and passionless, and we pass them by on the other side.

A good architect also is to the manner born. The principles of proportion in designing a building are difficult to adjust to give pleasure to the eye. Now, the sense of proportion is a gift which some men possess and others lack; although they are architects by profession, they are amateurs in construction. Without that subtle sense of proportion a man blunders through his designs, and puts no feeling of beauty or joy in the finished structure which is the work of his hands. Ruskin says: "It is just as rational an attempt to teach a young architect how to

proportion truly and well by calculating for him the proportions of fine works as it would be to teach him to compare melodies by calculating the mathematical relations of the notes in Beethoven's 'Adelaide' or Mozart's 'Requiem.' The man who has eye and intellect will invent beautiful proportions, and cannot help it; but he can no more tell us how to do it than Wordsworth could tell us how to write a sonnet, or than Scott could have told us how to plan a romance."

What the faculty of feeling is to the artist, what the sense of proportion is to the architect, the gift of style is to the writer. Style is the witchery of words; style is clothing thought in captivating language. Style is the setting of the gem. The gem may be rare, but it needs the aid of the goldsmith's art to make the most of it. It is the skilful setting that holds up the sparkling gem to our admiration. Style is everything in writing; it makes the thoughts sparkle. Niceties of style you cannot explain by rule-of-three, nor dissect its individuality by the drastic deed of vivisection; you cannot slash the heart out of it with a critickin's reckless knife. You can unravel a piece of rare old Flemish tapestry, and destroy the beautiful design and harmonious colouring of it. In fact, you can reduce the tapestry to a heap of valueless threads of worsted fit only for burning; but style in literature you cannot pick to pieces. You cannot find the master-thread on which the secret of the pattern runs, and which reveals the cunning of the workman's craft. By some mysterious process the writer weaves words together that the chambers of our imagination may be hung with tapestries rare and pleasant to behold. No explanation of the gift of penmanship is possible. Moulding words into forms of beauty is not an achievement: it is a gift of the gods, and no handbook of literature, however diligently pursued, can turn an artisan into an artist cunning in gold-minted phrases.

When Castiglione sent the manuscript of his book, "The Perfect Courtier," to Vittoria Colonna for her approval, she replied in a flattering letter thanking the author, saying: "The subject is new and beautiful, but the excellence of the style is such that, with a sweetness never before felt, it leads us up a most pleasant and fertile slope, which we gradually ascend without perceiving that we are no longer on the level ground from which we started; and the way is so well cultivated and adorned that we scarce can tell whether Art or Nature has done most to make it fair."

It is expression that counts, and the writer who expresses himself simply, vividly, concisely, boldly, and plays upon our heart-strings at pleasure, is naturally a "gifted" man. He not only sees in clear, full vision himself, but he brings his vision home to our cloudy brains and makes us see clearly; that is the wonder of it. It needs all the art and magic and persuasion of language to accomplish this difficult task. We *see* the subject presented as a picture when he writes with a graphic pen; we *feel* poignantly when his sharp and polished periods pierce

like a rapier our understanding; we are *fascinated* when his impassioned eloquence flows, glittering like running water in the sunlight, dazzling our bewildered brains. And when he scores by his native wit and writes in his trenchant, racy mother-tongue there is a smile in the stalls and loud laughter in the pit.

How mysteriously beauty steals into language and warms up the radiant face of poetry with glowing vitality. There is no beauty in stale prosaic sentences like "Trespassers will be prosecuted" or "Rubbish may be shot here," because they say exactly and completely all that they have to say and nothing more can be squeezed out of them. There is beauty in a sentence like "The bright day is done. And we are for the night," or "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass," because in them, although they seem quite simple, the poet is trying to say infinitely more than he can pack into words. It is the effort to do something beyond the power of words; it is the effort to investigate the alluring Infinite with a mind closely fettered within the cramped and narrow finite that can only stretch forth a hand here and there between prison bars and touch the azure of infinitude which is the dreamland of the soul; it is this reaching out that brings beauty into language: it enflames the imagination; it ruffles the emotions; unutterable thoughts linger on the lips and fail to break away. There is a greatness in these winged words feathered with beauty because they mean a thousand times more than speaks on the surface.

When I was young the magic of words took possession of my virgin mind. The first master of language that I served under was John Ruskin. The aim of good writing is to communicate feeling; Ruskin did this intensely. The indefinable richness and power of words as they flowed from his pen, the musical and measured cadence of his prose, and the limpid clearness of his thoughts when cast on paper, placed an hypnotic spell upon me. When reading one of his books, I dwelt in dreamland. Another reading that I enjoyed with avidity in the seventies and eighties of the last century was the long literary leaders, never too long for me, in the *Daily Telegraph*. The best literary talent of the day wrote them. Many of them I cut out and placed in my scrap-book; alas! to be buried in decent sepulchre, for I never see them now. Lord Burnham, the proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph*, put himself into these leaders, although other pens wrote them. They were his special hobby, and grew under his inspiration. His biographer tells us: "He had the rhetorical sense strongly developed. He liked full-blooded writing, and had a tenderness for big words and big adjectives, well-matched and in pairs. He revelled in the warmth and colour of certain words, and the more resonant they were, the better he liked them." Words carry not only meaning, but atmosphere with them. Sometimes a single word well chosen and well placed in a sentence gives feeling, and lights it up with a glow of beauty. J. A. Symonds says: "The right word used in the right place constitutes the perfection of style."

In my youth a literary friend was pruning a crude essay I had written; he paused in his reading on the word "fallacious," and he said: "That's a good word and well chosen; it's the right word." It was a revelation to me at the time that one word was better than another if they both meant the same thing. On thinking it over, I saw that no two words do mean exactly the same thing, and that there is only one right word in a hundred to express exactly your meaning and to give life to it. The other ninety-and-nine words are but poor relations—nay! they are all dead corpses.

Perhaps you remember Millais' wonderfully popular picture called "Cinderella." A beautiful healthy English child, with deep dreamy eyes and long wavy golden hair sits on a stool by the kitchen fire holding in her hand a birch broom emblem of her kitchen toil. It is a fascinating picture. At home I look on a coloured print of it nearly every day of the week. The most brilliant thing on the canvas is the patch of scarlet in the dainty cap the child wears. That single dab of red seems to concentrate in itself the whole colour-scheme of the picture. It is the keynote. Now a single word in a sentence sometimes gives a startling effect. It strikes a strong, clear, ringing note which keys the writer's passing mood, fascinates us with its vividness, and sticks in the memory ever after. It is a colour-patch in literary art which dominates the picture and arrests attention, as in Shakespeare's

"Every yesterday hath lighted fools
The way to *dusty* death!"

Or,

"The *primrose* path to the eternal bonfire."

Or Pope's

"Quick effluvia darting through the brain
Die of a rose in *aromatic* pain."

Also

"Cease, fond Nature, cease thy strife,
And let me *languish* into life."

And Gray's inimitable couplet:

”There pipes the song-thrush, and the skylark there
Scatters his *loose* notes in the waste of air.”

It is the height of literary skill to gather up your thought into a single word and fling it flaming on canvas. It is more convincing than a long chapter of dull argument which drugs the senses. Tennyson knew the magic of a single epithet in the thought scheme of the moment when he sang: ”All the charm of all the muses often flowering in a lonely word.” It is not as easily done as eating hot cakes for tea, for it is not the first word that comes sailing into a man’s head that is the right word. ”The comely phrase, the well-born word,” is a prince of high degree, and you may wait in his anteroom days before an audience is granted. The elect word does not sit on the tip of the tongue and drop into its place at call. You may search diligently and not find it, and presently of its own free will it comes to you, a happy thought flashed from the void where whispering spirits dwell. Gray’s *Elegy* is the most perfect poem in the English language. It was not thrown together carelessly in an idle hour one sleepy summer afternoon. Every word and every line of it cost thought, was written and rewritten, and patiently polished over again. For eight years the author held the poem between the hammer and the anvil, beating it into shape before he passed it into print. He damaged reams of paper developing a fair copy of those immortal verses.

V

THE LURE OF AN OLD TUSCAN GARDEN

A delightful French writer says ”to grow old in a garden in sight of softly undulating hills, beneath a sky variable as the human soul, is very sweet, very consoling, very easy. One becomes more of a child and for the first time a philosopher. Poetry and wisdom on every hand permeate the close of life, just as the oblique rays of the setting sun penetrate into the heart of the densest foliage, which is impervious to the vertical beams of noonday.” This charming writer touches the spot; experience, tenderness, and sympathy flow from mellowed lips well rounding to the autumn of life. Old age does reflect more discerningly than impatient youth, and in a garden, too, surrounded by a heavenly host of flowers whose blossom is

as laughter and whose perfume is a song. Romance sketches wonderful pictures with such a beatific background to inspire it, and imagination wanders into a carnival of dreams. How many pleasant thoughts and noble thoughts have been brought to birth in a garden which afterward grew into brave deeds and gentle lives contributing generously to enrich the sum of human happiness!

I sit under an ilex-tree in an old Tuscan garden which in course of many generations has belonged to many owners. A haunting beauty fills the ancient place, which one can feel, but cannot understand. A friendly atmosphere that pervades old gardens saturates the solitude. It is more than atmosphere, it is influence—a caressing influence almost human that holds us up and tantalizes. Vague ancestral memories of old families flash upon the mind; for more than four hundred years men and women have walked and talked and thought in this Tuscan garden of mine, and tended its flowers and enjoyed its tranquillity. Children have played in it, often going to bed tired and happy after romping in it the livelong day, and so generation after generation mankind repeats itself in the life-story of the old garden on a Tuscan hillside. The spirit of the past haunts it in shadow and in sunshine, because wherever men have been they leave a little of themselves behind in ghostly exhalations.

When one is in a contemplative humour a garden is full of object-lessons interesting to study. By dint of watching leaf replace leaf, insects come into life and die, blossoms change into fruit, fruit ripen and fall, the swallows come with the daffodils and depart when the hunter's moon frightens them away—by watching these things methodically and silently accomplishing their allotted tasks, I have come to think about myself with brave resolution and resigned conformity to natural laws. I grieve less over myself when I regard the change which is universal; the setting sun and the dying summer help me also to decline gently. Life is a splendid heritage to hold in fee, but we quit and deliver up possession when our lease expires. The light must be kept burning if our own little taper flickers into darkness.

A young girl visited us in Florence one spring-time. She lived in the garden among the flowers, caressed them, talked to them, and gathered them by the handful, the armful, the basketful. She decorated the rooms with flowers, filled glass bowls and bronze vases with flowers, and her art touched its zenith in glorifying the dinner-table every evening with the choicest of them all. She chatted, smiled, and sang whilst doing it, for she dearly loved the flowers that she fondled.

We took her to the Uffizi to see the world-renowned Old Masters there; but she yawned in front of masterpieces of art, and her eyes wandered round searching the smart costumes of the ladies in the room. We took her to Rome and showed her the sights of the Eternal City, but Bond Street and Regent Street interested her more than St. Peter's and the Coliseum. We visited the Forum with

its ruined temples and triumphal arches, and trod the Via Sacra; but the place was only an old stoneyard to her, devoid of interest, so we left her to herself, and she wandered over the Forum on other pleasure bent, and we found her afterwards picking violets amongst the ruins.

When at home again a friend asked how she enjoyed her visit to Rome, and had she seen the Forum? In blank despair she appealed to me to help her out of it. "Yes," I replied, "you saw the Forum; that is where you picked the violets." The Forum to her was deadly dull and forgotten even by name, but a bunch of wild violets lived vividly in her memory as the crown and flower of her heart's desire, more excellent than all the ruins of Rome.

Dulness comes to us in uncongenial company and occupation. You may be surrounded by objects of interest and beauty which amuse other people, but if these worthy objects do not fit your taste, for you they contain no element of delight, and you are bored utterly with them whoever may sing their praise. It is a question of temperament. The heart is not dull if the head is *triste*. Every eye makes its own beauty and every heart forms its own kinships. Put me in front of a post-impressionist picture and dulness covers me like a funeral pall. The beauties of the glowing picture composed of significant form and bunkum are lost on me completely. Here is something tremendously original that makes demands on my intelligence that I cannot meet. I am mentally bankrupt in front of this maddening art.

Looking at a post-impressionist picture, you see only shapes and forms tangled together within the limited area of a gilt frame; you see relations and quantities of colour splashed on canvas meaning anything you choose to label it, but in the likeness of nothing God made or man ever saw. It distorts nature and scoffs at portraiture. "Creating a work of art," trumpets the evangelist of post-impressionism, "is so tremendous a business that it leaves no leisure for catching a likeness." "You look at a landscape, and you are not to see it as fields and cottages; instead you are to see it as lines and colours." Yet up against this lucid statement I observe no reason why the portrait of a man should be drawn like a peculiarly shaped market-garden divided into plots for growing vegetables. Nor can I explain why the picture of a village street should look like a fortnight's wash suspended in a cherry orchard, and the policeman standing in front of the village inn at the corner should look like a laundry-maid hanging out the clothes. It requires uncommon genius to work the illusion successfully, and to start an indolent British public frivolling with the captivating puzzle. But it leaves me cold and passionless, for I am slow of understanding these things. They say an impressionist picture of top-note character is a painfully exciting object for the spectator to worship. To do it justice, he must squirm in front of it, for it is a picture that creates a thunderstorm of rhapsody, a deluge of delight, a

roaring cataract of æsthetic emotion in the soul of the man who understands its cryptic language. The artist who limned the picture suffers agonies whilst working up significant form, being pricked with pins and needles of excitement, and is continually dancing on the hot-plate of rapture. The spectator's duty when viewing a work of art is to come into touch with the mind of the artist. To do this no wonder the spectator has a bad time when digesting a whole gallery of post-impressionist pictures.

Their religion is as bewildering as their art. For their moral vision is out of kilter, as their eyesight is out of focus. The aforesaid evangelist of the cult says: "I doubt whether the good artist bothers much more about the future than about the past. Why should artists bother about the fate of humanity? If art does not justify itself, æsthetic rapture does.... Rapture suffices. The artist has no more call to look forward than the lover in the arms of his mistress. There are moments in life that are ends to which the whole history of humanity would not be an extravagant means; of such are the moments of æsthetic ecstasy."

We return to the garden, for the lure of a garden relaxes not. The joy of it entangles you in its toils. Each successive season of the year unfolds new developments which lead you on to the next season. So you are handed on from one month to another throughout the gardener's calendar by endless enticements which keep the interest gently simmering. The procession of gay flowers that promenade the sheltered borders and disport themselves with flagrant pride on open beds during spring and summer days, tricked in rainbow colours, dazzle the eye with splendour, win the heart's endearment, and pay in noblest coin full recompense for the chill, dull toil given in grey winter hours.

A lady friend who lived to a ripe old age said to me jocosely, "To be a good gardener you need a wooden back with an iron hinge to it, for you are bending and stooping all day long in the garden." Only by constant labour spent on the good brown earth can you become candidate for possession of this useful garden requisite, a wooden back with an iron hinge to it, or the neatest imitation offered on the market. In the garden you get in touch with Nature, breathe fresh air, cultivate a contented mind, and never stagnate in idleness or degenerate into ennui. Your body, inured to all weathers, escapes many little ills of the flesh, and gradually you harden into an iron constitution, which is the nearest earthly substitute to a wooden back hung on iron hinges.

You never need remain indoors to smoke or sew or yawn because there is nothing doing in the garden: you can weed there the livelong day in the open. This lowly service offers immediate reward; it begets a healthy appetite at meal-times, and develops a night's sound sleep, which is some pleasure no millionaire can buy with his millions. Weeding puzzles my blind gardener Emilio.

I have two brothers gardeners, Enrico and Emilio. Enrico has sight only of

one eye, Emilio is blind both eyes. The two brothers work together in brotherly love, and have only one working eye between them, yet it is wonderful how much good work the one eye accomplishes per day. Emilio sees with his hands. It is weeding that puzzles him most. He never pulls a flower instead of a weed—he feels the difference between them. It is the weeds that elude his fingers as he works along the border that grieve him. Weeding is a fascinating occupation to me. Nice people won't profane their hands grubbing in common garden soil, but, being a groundling myself, I enjoy the fun of coming into contact with my native element. Clean, sweet, caressing earth, it is the last flowery coverlet all of us will sleep under; why shun thy friendly touch to-day? There is always an abundant crop of weeds to practise on in an Italian garden, and your fingers itch to uproot them to the very last offender. I suppose it is the ruthlessness and slaughter of the deed, the close handgrip on the enemy, that compels you on; and when the skirmish is over, surveying the ground cleared of the foe and the heaps of the slain withering at your feet gives a pleasurable thrill of excitement in the hour of victory. You exult, for there is something done, and well done, to show for your backache.

The gardener's lure is irresistible. The devotee walks in flowerland of his own creation. In dreary winter hours he dreams splendid dreams of himself surrounded by summer harmonies, summer fragrance, and summer flowers, for which he has planned and planted and patiently tended along the covering months of winter and spring. The hour of full realization approaches when the roses mass their rival glories and spread their coloured raptures in the garden that he loves. This puts the crown on the brow of summer. This is the gardener's festival of the year. He invites his horticultural cronies to tea on the lawn, and they all talk rose jargon together. He takes them on a tour of inspection round the garden, and they congratulate the founder of the feast of flowers. They are happy as a band of Sunday-school children spending the afternoon out. They sit on the lawn under the spreading ilex-tree, which casts ample shadow for their comfort, and the summer sunshine lays ardent on the green-sward around them. It is a genial gathering, but the man who understands not roses would be speechless in their midst and not a little bored. Conversation cools off, the evening shadows lengthen, and in an interlude of silence there is a sort of whispering stillness in the warm evening air, as if the flowers and grass and trees are all saying kind words to one another, for having done their best to please. The lure of the garden is never so poignant as at this great moment, for your heart is brimming of sweet content, and you say to yourself: "Can it be true? Can anything in the world be more beautiful?"

There is another lure that lays hands on a man like grappling-irons tackling a Spanish galleon laden with treasure, with a grip which cannot be shaken off: I

mean the writer's lure. I am fond of reading. The enticements of a good book are hard to resist, especially if you have no inclination to resist, but tumble a ready victim to the writer's charm.

What is the writer's lure? How does it cast its spell? You can talk round the subject by metaphor and symbol and figure of speech, but cannot solve it like a problem in Euclid and add Q.E.D. at the end. The writer's lure is the vividest way of saying things. It is a bolt shot from the mind that hits the penman's mark. The writer's lure fixes you even as a beautiful sympathetic picture holds you up by its witchery of art. In the picture warmth of colour, grace of line, melting tints, dreamy distance, and an added mystic charm brooding over all, voice lovingly your taste in art, and, like a haunted man, you carry the landscape about with you all day long. It intrudes on your mind midst pressing business affairs; the sunlight sleeping on the hills creates a pleasant interlude of thought when engrossed in life's little worries. Turner's "Crossing the Brook" in the Tate Gallery is a picture that bewitches me when I see it. It stimulates my imagination and sets my thoughts sailing over the country carried on the breezes which blow across the Turner landscape.

A book haunts you in the selfsame way as a picture. You read a book, and it stirs your emotions and captivates your fancy, and for a time it possesses you like a living spirit. The writer's lure holds you in its grip. The book soaks into you. A sentence here and there leaps to memory during odd moments of the day; the rhythm of the language ripples musically as a chime of bells, and you repeat the sentence to yourself again and again. The aptness of an image is lifelike, and a vision floats across your mind; the happy turn of a sentence sticks. The fresh, clear-cut thought shot out boldly from the writer's brain conveys a new idea; you recall the touch of humour resembling a patch of warm sunshine twinkling on the landscape, and your lips curve into a smile. There are passages of tenderness also that you treasure, because they find your heart like shafts of love feathered with joy. All these things in the book come back to you vividly, and whisper their fond message over again.

One cannot explain the writer's lure. You may name it, but you cannot catch it in the reviewer's trap of criticism. It is illusive as the angel who visited Manoah and his wife, wrought wondrously, and vanished leaving no trace. It is a secret of pencraft which defies definitions and eludes analysis, yet it is the vital element in composition. It is not a question of conforming to correct standards of good writing by which literary excellence is judged, the writer being blessed or cursed by the censors according to the measure of his allegiance to their literary creed. Some writers violate every literary canon set up to guide their pen in the way of righteousness, but they are alive with literary fire; the vital element is fecund within them, and they riot in the power of it. There are no rules

in art that great writers have not shown us how to break with advantage. You cannot resolve the writer's lure into its component parts as you can a potato. Like electricity, it defies analysis, but, like the electric current, you feel it in your bones.

Blind Emilio does not work by rules taught in popular garden manuals; he gathers inspiration for his craft direct from the heavens. He is an oracle of occult information and prevision almost uncanny, concerning things in the garden and out of it. However, he is a cheerful soul and a born optimist, so we consult him often and rely on his wisdom, because, like honey, its flavour is pleasant to the taste.

The moon is the guiding providence regulating some of Emilio's important duties. He observes the phases of the moon with the reverence of an astrologer of legendary days. He awaits the waning moon in February to prune the rose-trees. A potent mystic virtue dwells in a waning moon according to his garden lore, which is old as his pagan ancestors. If you prune rose-trees in a waxing moon the new growths will be long, weak shoots, and the crop of roses in the summer poor, puny things. Prune in the waning moon and the new growths will be short, sturdy rods bearing large flowers, and an abundance of them. Garden seed must be sown under the auspices of the waning moon if you want your flower-beds in the summer-time to be renowned for beauty, to make your friends envious of your success and yourself just swaggeringly happy.

What applies to roses and seed applies equally to pruning vines and grafting fruit-trees. Bulbs and potatoes may be planted any time. They move in the spring when Nature signals whether they are in the ground or out of it. They are outside the ritual of the moon.

We had a heavy crop of diospyros last autumn, drawn from four trees in the kitchen-garden. These fruits are fat, round, rosy fellows, plump as overgrown tomatoes. The flesh of the ripe diospyros is Nature's jam, soft and mushy, delicious in flavour, and eaten politely with a spoon. Our neighbour who hails from Cincinnati grew a crop of small, sickly-looking fruit. "Ah!" said Emilio, "now that you see the difference in the two crops, you must believe me. Their diospyros were gathered in the growing moon, and they shrivel and lose colour and flavour; ours were gathered in the waning moon, and keep beautiful and sound to the end of the season." There is good luck under the waning moon. Another explanation of the difference in the crops has merit, which Emilio considers treason to the honourable tradition of his fathers. Our fruit was grown in the kitchen-garden on manured soil; our American neighbour's trees stand on a rocky bank in the wild garden which is never dressed with manure. The blessing of the moon falls on the crop that is best nourished in the days of its youth.

In the garden is an avenue of lime-trees about one hundred and sixty feet

long. In the summer it forms a deliciously shady walk; in rainy weather it is a clean and pleasant promenade, for it has a paved pathway in it. The north end of the avenue terminates in a large semicircular stone seat mounted on a stone base one step higher than the pathway. The seat has no florid decorative carving on it to arouse hostility or provoke criticism. It is just a plain seat of simple Roman type, roomy and comfortable to sit on. Behind the seat curves a semicircle of thirteen cypress-trees screening the north winds. Again, behind the cypress-trees is an interesting old stone wall about twenty feet high, forming the boundary of the garden. Above the wall, rising in gentle slope, is the south shoulder of the hill, on the hill-top sits Fiesole, the famous Etruscan city of history and legend. The slope is covered with olives and vines, forming a mantle grey and green with its leafy fringe dropping on our garden wall.

This great retaining wall is old as the villa which was purchased by Domenico Mori in 1475. The history of the house earlier than this date is lost in the mist of antiquity. The ancient wall is a feature in the garden, for on two sides it towers like a cliff, forming a charming background to the scene. It has weathered beautifully with the ages, and is an immense stretch of canvas for the display of masses of colour. In places it is bleached silvery-grey, and elsewhere the tinted lichen mottle it with saffron and orange and brown, and every delectable shade and tone which Time, the great decorator, with loving hand, imparts to old stone. It looks warm and gay and friendly, and grows a rock-garden of its own, for wild flowers bloom in its cracks and crannies and red valerian flames upon its heights, side by side with golden broom. Ivy clothes it in parts, and most mysteriously so, for years back the plants were cut off their roots, and the ivy now exists only on nourishment drawn from the wall, and it exists vigorously on the meagre diet the wall supplies. When the sunshine pours down upon its hoary time-worn face, the old wall is transfigured into a thing of triple splendour, for its colours glow and blaze with spiritual fervour imparting that artistic touch of nature which is the happy gift of garden plaisance.

Deeply set in the wall is the ruin of a small shrine. Once upon a time this shrine was the home of the Madonna, but now no Madonna occupies the niche. Some pious ancestor of the house implored gracious protection of the Mother of Jesus on behalf of his vines and olives, fruits and flowers, and he set up her Ladyship's sheltered image in the little vaulted temple on the wall as guardian of the crops, hoping that fat harvest would follow his devotion to Our Lady of Plenty. The vacant shrine is desolate and crumbling and mossy now, and so is the sentimental faith of those ancient days. It was a hallowed sentiment in its way, this worship of the Madonna. Men lived up to it, and felt happy in their prayers to the Lady of Heaven. Nowadays men win good harvests on more scientific lines. They put trust in deep ploughing and artificial manure rather than in prayers and

oblations to the Mother of God.

The personal intervention of the Deity in the affairs of men strikes a homely note in the world's domestic management, and brings the Heavenly Father in close touch with His earthly family; but the dear God's blessing is level-handed, and favours His children, bad or good, who work the hardest, and add intelligence to their toil.

VI

THE LURE OF THE MONTELUPO PLATE

My friend Federico wandering through Tuscany on one of those delightful excursions that he loves, passing from town to town and village to village picking up "old things" *en route*, called at a dealer's shop in Bagni di Lucca. In the miscellaneous collection of antiquities there offered for sale he found nothing to please him. To console him in the hour of disappointment, the little dealer, named Grosso, said: "I know of a beautiful Montelupo plate that will take your fancy. Come with me; it is away up the hills, a pleasant ride for us. Give me a few francs for my trouble, and you can buy the plate." So they took a vettura and rode up the mountains in quest of the Montelupo plate. After an hour's delightful drive they stopped at a contadino's cottage on the roadside, and there, boldly on view to the passer-by and stuck on the weather-beaten front of the cottage over the doorway, was the Montelupo plate, the very heart's desire of the two adventurers. It was a brave plate, round as the sun and about thirteen inches in diameter. In the centre of it, painted in flaming colours, trotted a soldier on horseback with drawn sword in hand, but no painted foeman visible into which to bury the thirsty blade. The interior of the plate surrounding the warrior was a mass of rich deep orange ground; the colour much esteemed by collectors of this rural pottery. The contadinos in Tuscany once owned numerous specimens of these rustic dishes, which were used daily by them in their homes as common household crockery. They were nothing thought of in those far-off days of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They were made for the peasants' service, and if a plate was broken another was bought for half a franc in the next market town. The day came when the supply stopped and the plates could not be replaced. Some other novelty in kitchenware had the run of the market, and nobody wanted Montelupo plates.

Fashion set in about twenty years ago to collect this crude, curious, neglected pottery, so grotesque and humorous in design and coarse in workmanship, but when reposing against the wall of a well-lit room certainly showy and decorative for all time. They carry amusing and picturesque subjects, comical or satirical in treatment. Not very artistic, but cleverly and freely drawn with a few bold lines to catch the peasant's sense of humour, which was easily tickled. The plates revel in brightness and colour. Colour holds the eye and courts our admiration, and fancy prices rule the market.

The rarest plates to find are those burlesquing the Churchman. The soldier, the farmer, and the serving-maid took the joke kindly, but the plates in which the monk was caricatured offended the Church dignitaries, and these specimens were bought up mysteriously, quickly destroyed, and now cannot be found.

When the fashion set in, wandering dealers and touring collectors made haste to buy. They spread themselves over the country; knocked at cottage doors in out-of-the-way places in Tuscany, begged a glass of milk, admired the plates on the kitchen dresser, and offered to buy at a few francs apiece. The contadino soon found he had something good, and the price rose to ten francs each. Still the plates were admired by tired travellers resting in out-of-the-way cottages drinking a glass of milk. The price rose incontinently to twenty, thirty, fifty francs, until the peasants discovered a gold-mine in their old kitchen crockery, and now their stock is sold out. To-day the plates are found only in the hands of dealers, and good specimens command prices anywhere between a hundred and two hundred and fifty francs each.

The owner of the Montelupo plate over the cottage door asked sixty francs for his family treasure. My friend borrowed a ladder, that he might have it down to examine. "No," said the owner; "you must buy it where it is, and pay for it first." Federico's fancy was caught with the pretty toy; he submitted to the hard terms, and paid the sixty francs. Little Grosso now mounted the ladder to bring down the plate. "I can't move it; it is cemented into the wall," he called to the new comer, standing below. So he borrowed a hammer and chisel, and ran nimbly up the ladder again and began chipping round the plate.

Immediately the whole village was on the spot, standing round, excited, chattering, watching the job. A noisy man, the cock of the village, slung himself forward and shouted strenuously. He demanded to know what they were doing: "That plate has been there for over a hundred years. It is a very important piece, and is worth much money. It is of great value. Who has bought it? What have you paid for it?"

"I have bought it," said my friend; "I have given sixty francs for it, and as you think it so valuable, I will sell it to you for sixty francs. Will you have it at the price I gave for it?"

Federico has a lovable disposition. He takes life placidly. He takes taxes placidly, he takes bad trade placidly, he takes the war placidly, he takes a human tornado placidly. The noisy man exploded—shouted louder and louder, and scattered his arms about in the air, gesticulating like the sails of a windmill racing in a stiff breeze, but he did not buy the village treasure. Grosso on the ladder kept on chipping round the plate, the crowd watching him critically.

Presently he called out, "Signore, the plate is in two pieces!" My friend said to the noisy man: "Do you want to buy the plate? It is in two pieces—you can have it for fifty francs." He did not take on, but continued talking, gesticulating, and exciting the onlookers. Grosso continued chipping round the plate. He called out again, "Signore, the plate is even in three pieces." So my friend said to the village bully, "You can have the plate for thirty francs." But he did not buy at the price. Grosso resumed his work, hacking round the plate. He called out again, "Signore, the plate is in many pieces!" So Federico shouted to the troublesome man: "Now is your chance; you can have the plate for twenty francs. I paid sixty for it; will you give me twenty?"

The man folded himself up and slunk off; the crowd also melted away, and Grosso went on chipping, and put fragment after fragment of the plate in his pocket as he released them from their cement setting. He came down the ladder with the broken plate in his pocket in ten pieces. They rode home to Bagni di Lucca, feeling a bit miserable on the journey. At Bagni di Lucca my friend comforted Grosso with a good dinner in the restaurant and gave him seven francs for his trouble. "And what about the plate?" said Grosso, when my friend bid him good-bye. "You keep it, Grosso. I don't want it." "No," said Grosso; "the plate is yours. You have treated me well and given me seven francs. I am more than satisfied." "Keep it," was the reply; and away Federico went home, just a little disappointed with the result of his expedition up the mountains. The lure of the Montelupo dish had proved a failure.

Next year he visited Bagni di Lucca in quest of antiques, and called upon Grosso the dealer. On entering the shop he saw the Montelupo plate hanging against the wall, looking gay as ever without visible crack or cleavage on it. The dealer had cunningly dove-tailed the plate together, and it looked faultless to the eye. "It is yours," said Grosso; "I have kept it for you. Customers wanted to buy it. I knew you would come again to see me." After much persuasion and a consideration, Federico took the plate home and hung it in his studio amongst a collection of treasured antiques which he has gathered round him there and are the joy of his heart. It was much admired, and the romance of its history, often related, was as often listened to with amusement and laughter.

One day a Florentine dealer visited the studio and fell in love with the Mon-

telupo plate, and bought it for ninety francs.

VII THE LURE OF PLUCK

It happened in Rome; in our apartment on the Piazza di Spagna. We had a visit from a Countess. She was heralded by her visiting-card, on which blazed a coronet—an awe-inspiring visiting-card, imposing enough to reduce to the ground the most blatant democrat. What did the unknown Countess want? we asked each other with palpitating hearts. Had she come to invite us to visit her ancestral castle in the Sabine Hills? Was she a messenger from the Queen of Italy summoning us to an audience in the Quirinal Palace? What did this high-toned lady want? My wife faced the music alone. She entered the room, and saw a shabbily dressed old lady rambling about amongst the furniture.

“Ah!” exclaimed the Countess; “please excuse me the liberty of admiring your old Italian furniture; it is very fine indeed. I am so fond of it. I used to have my rooms full of it, but we sold it all to dealers. They gave us a good price for it. We are reduced in circumstances now, and I have called to ask if you would buy some jam from me. I make it myself, and have good clients among the English and American residents. I charge 3.50 lire for a jar, and allow 50 centimes for the empty jar if returned when I call again.”

She produced some glass jars of jam and honey from a basket she carried under her cloak. Refined-looking jars; artistically labelled jars, assuring the purchaser that the jam within was made under perfect hygienic conditions. The wording of the labels was printed in accurate English; but the Countess could not speak English, not a broken sentence of it could she utter. The conversation was carried on in French. We bought a jar of jam and a jar of honey, and are looking hopefully for the return of the 50 centimes on the empty jars when next she calls on business intent.

It is no hedgerow jam, no common cottage mixture of blackberry and apple she offered us, but highly aristocratic peach jam from choicest fruits grown in coroneted orchards. And the honey she offered was superior honey; not the produce of old-fashioned garden flowers and wild heather from the hills—anybody breeds that plebeian honey. Her bees were classic to the core, lived in the garden

of Hesperides, and fed only on orange-blossoms and acacia. No honey had an aroma equal to hers.

Dear, good old soul! There was lots of fine metal in her character; she was a piece of rare old silver plate with hall-mark clearly impressed on it, but in somewhat battered and bruised condition. She had been roughly handled in the hard-hammering world. She had lost everything but manners and breeding. She could sell jam with the grace and dignity of a Queen bestowing royal favours on a subject. She was striving to maintain herself honourably in the sight of all men, and she would die in the last ditch rather than beg. Her pluck lured her on to the winning-post.

There are sensitive people who, when hard-hit by Fortune, mope like moulting fowls and creep into dark corners of the earth; they do not strut in the market-place and shout loud-throated their woes to the crowd; they lower their flag and surrender themselves to fate. Their vanity supports their poverty, and their poverty breaks their heart. Really, these people are victims of false shame. False shame deludes their common sense. It discolours their imagination, enfeebles their will-power, and drives them on to the rocks to feed with the goats. Their misfortune assumes an exaggerated character in their own minds. They fancy that the world stares coldly on them in their adversity and whispers contemptuously against them behind their backs, and they collapse in the frigid atmosphere with which they surround themselves.

Their vanity betrays them into surmising unwholesome things. They fidget about themselves in their supersensitiveness. They adore public opinion, and fancy themselves filling a large place in its consideration, and they dread the smiting lash of its hostile criticism. The truth is humiliating but very refreshing to our morbid disposition, and the truth is that people are not thinking much about us, however conspicuously we imagine ourselves to be painted in the picture. We are only one of a crowd of common people, nor even the most interesting figure in it. It is unwise to esteem ourselves to be of immeasurably more consequence than we really are. The busy world at best gives us only a passing thought. Dr. Johnson bluntly said: "No man is much regarded by the rest of the world. The utmost which we can reasonably hope or fear is to fill a vacant hour with prattle and be forgotten." If a man thinks no more seriously of his own misfortunes than his neighbour thinks of them, his troubles will be lightly borne.

However, the world is much more good-natured than the man of morbid temper gives it credit for. Penetrate through its cold reserve, and you often find within a warm, sympathetic heart. The good English heart is oft-times hedged by a *chevaux de frise* of English hauteur hard to break through, but get within the lines and you receive a cordial welcome.

Our sturdy Countess was not afflicted with false shame. She had pride,

but not vanity. Vanity is a coquette and says, "What do you think of me?" and tremblingly awaits your verdict. Pride says, "I am as good as you are, and I don't care a damn." It is not every decadent Countess who sells jam to keep her end up in this see-saw world. It requires grit and a rare brand of pride uncommon in the quality to rise to the occasion. There is a vain pride that welters into nothingness in the dismal hour of failure, and starves tragically like a rat in a trap rather than help itself or accept help from others. There is another pride—robust, full-blooded pride—that spurns the conventionalities of caste, takes off its coat and fights misfortune face to face resolutely for its daily bread, and wins through. This is where our heroic Countess steps in splendour.

Why immolate oneself on the altar of family pride? A false goddess sits enshrined there on a false throne. Why live on the reputation a forefather won in the Middle Ages? That reputation is now spent capital; it is worthless scrip on the social market to-day. Build another reputation for yourself, clean and sweet and new. If ill luck drops you in the ditch, to maintain inviolate the family honour you must get up and with ungloved hands work your way out of it like a man. Sell jam.

Perhaps you hate wearing a brand-new reputation. It sets on you like a misfitting coat. You are an heir of the glorious past, and exult on the length in your ancient lineage. Remember also you are a trustee of the splendid future; the shining days to come demand your thoughtful consideration. Do rare credit to your sacred trust. It is better to transmit honour to your descendants than to borrow fame from your ancestors. It is better to be lovingly remembered than nobly born. That grim old ancestor of yours who built the family fortune out of nothing and grimly fought every inch of the way up to renown single-handed would despise you for a poltroon lying derelict in the ditch of despair. If the family fall throws you to the ground, are you going to lie there indefinitely and rot like offal? Sell jam.

An Italian nobleman went to America to repair his fallen fortunes. He refused to soil his hands in trade; his old family title was the magic key he carried to open the treasure-chests of the New World. So he arrived in America armed with a despatch-box full of introductions to money magnates there. He called upon a banker in New York, and presented a letter of introduction. The banker asked him what he knew about business. "Nothing," replied the nobleman; "I am a cavalry officer." "Sorry I cannot help you," said the banker; "the circus left our town yesterday." The nobleman was floored. Enraged at the magnate's laconic insolence, he destroyed all letters of introduction contained in his despatch-box and tackled the world on his own. He folded up his family pedigree, laid it in lavender, went into the market and sold jam. In the market-place a long head is a better weapon to fight with than a long pedigree. He worked out his own

salvation, and returned home and lived contentedly amongst the orange-groves and sunshine of Southern Italy.

VIII

THE LURE OF OLD FURNITURE

Eight old Chippendale chairs and two settees sold recently at Christie's for 5,600 guineas, and report says quickly after the auctioneer's hammer dismissed the lot they changed hands again at £1,000 profit to the buyer. There must be great charm in old furniture when people scramble for it regardless of cost. I suppose money is dull stuff to own heaps of unless you can exchange it for things that give the heart a passing thrill of pleasure (the great sport is in the making it); and the more money you make, the more it takes you to work up the thrill. A millionaire's smile is an expensive hobby to cultivate. Gathering a bunch of wild primroses in the sunny April woods gladdens the heart of a child amazingly, and he dreams the pleasure over again in his sleep. It costs over 5,000 guineas to tingle the feelings of a rich man. The child's outlay is more economical, but it fetches as much enjoyment.

Wherein lies the secret charm of old furniture? I love it myself, and for that reason ask the question for the pleasure given in answering it. I am only a trifler in antiques, possessing a few pieces of exquisite old oak of the seventeenth-century period; also several pieces of walnut furniture which are old Italian. The Italian pieces lie fallow in a villa just outside the *barriera* St. Domenico, Florence, where we live with them half the year round. Beautiful old walnut furniture counts much more in its own homeland, while the alien oak of England, which we love here, is cold and expressionless in the rooms of an Italian villa on the sunny slopes of Fiesole. It loses its aura in a strange land.

Old furniture with a time-worn glossy face on it is interesting because it is made by the hands of man; and the man used his brain in making it, as well as his hands; surely man's delight is in man's work. A piece of old furniture reflects the mind of its maker in every detail of its construction, and that is a very fascinating feature to me; for we are told on high authority that "hand-work possesses character, almost personality," and we believe the high authority with all our heart.

Modern furniture has no personality, and so it transmits no message; it is machine-made, and I hold no kinship with machinery to cherish warm feeling in its favour; but handcraft ever commands our respect, and when well done wins our widest admiration.

Machine-made work carries a lie on the face of it; it imitates handwork. The machine simulates a trouble that has not been taken. It produces beautifully designed and ornamented imitations of ancient handcraft at trifling cost. Who cares for beauty produced by formula? Beauty is the flowering of noble labour linked to useful purpose. Cheapness and showiness are the flaring advertisements of the mechanical cabinet-maker to-day, and he hits with precision the public taste.

Give me to admire something a man has laboured lovingly and honestly to produce, not what a machine vomits out standard pattern; something a man has put the power of his brain into as well as the dexterity of his hand. William Morris quaintly remarks: "If you have anything to say, you may as well put it into a chair or a table." The cabinet-maker speaks to us with his tools in a language of his own invention. The cabinet-maker has helped to make English homes comfortable to live in, and for so doing we owe him a debt of gratitude. His tools are not the sword and the cannon, but the plane, the chisel, and the swift-moving saw. His art is not destructive to life, piling on misery to man's many woes, but he enriches life manifold by adding comfort and luxury to the widening circle of human happiness. His rewards are not stars and garters and hereditary honours conferred by princes for brave deeds done on the field of battle, but just the recompense that the master of the tools' true play appreciates; the simple pleasure of good work well and truly done sent forth to take honourable place in the stately homes of England, knowing that by such fine hand-craft he will speak from his grave to people unborn; and he even cherishes the inspiring hope that those who are possessors of his treasured work done in oak and walnut and sweet satinwood will, in the hereafterward, in the quietude of their sequestered homes, surrounded by familiar furniture of high lineage, bestow on the workman a passing measure of praise; for these worthy craftsmen put the best of their lives into the labour of their hands.

Old furniture is delightful in your home because it is old. Age has an alchemy of its own that ennobles the work of man. A brand-new house is deadly unromantic, even if it is a dream of architectural excellence. Its appearance is garish and crude. New stones and raw bricks are ugly in the days of their youth, but age transforms the place, be it manor-house or thatched cottage, until enchantment haunts the fabric. I dearly love the grace of antiquity that mellows the venerable homesteads of England and blends the intermingling lustre of tradition with the roll of their lengthening years.

Age likewise has a mellowing influence on furniture. Obliteration of exactitude of form is essential charm in it as it is in a man or woman. You resent the loudness of a newly made rich man. His manners smell strongly of varnish just put on; his vanity and self-importance are unsavoury morsels to swallow without salt. He is a terror to his polite neighbours and a stranger to himself. Wait and see; he will tone down as the mills of life grind off the sharp angles and smooth him into a decent fellow.

Good taste resents primness and self-assertiveness in new furniture; its raw outlines and sharp angles offend the eye. When these stubborn features are subdued by centuries of wear and tear and the wondrous old-time bloom of rich deep colour glorifies the ripened oak with softness and transparency of tone, that quality so delightful to sight and touch which distinguishes genuine antique furniture, then sentimental feeling waxes strong and renders the work attractive to us.

Vague and visionary thoughts of past owners flit across the mind, and kindle emotions in the presence of an ancient piece of furniture of good repute. It idealizes in our minds, and becomes beautiful to us. It is a call of the past. It is an unwritten chapter in some old family history, and we want to handle the key of the legend locked up in it. There may be tragedy or comedy, or a mixture of both, recorded in the family log-book, and the stately old carved-oak court cupboard dozing in the banqueting-hall, generation after generation, saw it all through from beginning to end, but it whispers away no family secrets to inquisitive people. An evil day broke the family fortunes. The venerable court cupboard vacated its place of honour which it occupied for centuries in the Yorkshire manor-house, and has taken up quarters with us in our Sussex home. It is no longer mere chattel; there is human interest in it.

I wonder if it takes kindly to its new home? Land, they say, sometimes resents change of owners, especially passing from a family who had held lordship of the soil for generations. When the old squire dies, the last of his line, the land grieves. It seems to know that it is going to be sold and broken up, and it loses heart. It goes rotten like apples. A patch goes wrong here and a patch goes wrong there, and the rottenness spreads and runs together. It takes the land long to get used to a new master.

Has our old oak court cupboard sensitive feelings like the ancestral acres? Or is it silently and sullenly indifferent to all the changes of fortune that befall it?

I have an oak armchair with a unique story to tell. The back of it is one large panel carved with heavy flora and foliated decoration; on the cross-rail below the panel is carved in bold raised letters:

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The two arms are bountifully carved, and the carving terminates in a large Tudor rose forming a knob at the end of each arm. The arm-tops, through constant use, are smooth and shine like unto burnished bronze. The supports and front legs are twisted in good Jacobean manner, and the broad stretcher is carved with two long feathery, flowing acanthus-leaves curling round gracefully at the tips as if under pressure of a strong breeze, and crouching within their embrace nestles a rose in ambush. The chair has been mothered with lifelong care, and the bloom and beauty of age sit upon it like a crown of glory. So Ellin Ryland has won for her name immortality among the roses.

We often think of Ellin and question the chair about her, but information does not flow freely from that quarter. Did Ellin order the chair from the cabinet-maker herself? I think not; perhaps her lover gave it her on her birthday, or her husband on their wedding-day. No doubt the chair's existence celebrates a red-letter day in the annals of the family. The name now is only a legend to us, but there it is, legible after the flight of two hundred and twenty years. The old chair is a better monument to Ellin Ryland's memory than a stone slab in a damp churchyard, with her name graven on it in crumbling letters.

I dare say Ellin had a thin slice of vanity in her nature; we all have, and would like our names printed somewhere imperishably. During two hundred and twenty years the moss and lichen, the sun and the frost, conspire together to obliterate any lettering in churchyard stones, but the writing in tablet-oak on the armchair is as brave as ever. The name is only a legend, but it keeps her memory green.

I do not turn my house into a museum of antiques, but certainly I choose interesting old furniture to live with where choice is possible; it has a cheery influence on your temper. I love to walk amongst my treasures and touch them with my hand and admire their cloistered beauty. I started housekeeping in Victorian days, after the orthodox manner of Englishmen about to marry, by buying new furniture. To get the genuine article I bought it in framework and had it upholstered and finished at home, under my eye. As years rolled on, piece by piece the Victorian furniture vanished from our rooms and old pieces supplanted them, and the rooms grew pleasant to look upon and cosy to sit in. Your furniture has a subtle influence on your disposition. You live with it daily all the year round as you do with your wife, and you married her because she was the girl you loved best in the world, and since the wedding-day her influence has coloured your life more than you can measure and contributed mysteriously to make you the manner of man you are. Your furniture adds much to your pleasure and quiet enjoyment of home life if you have the right sort. Old furniture with quietness

of line is the best to live with—it is suggestive of repose.

I love old furniture because its workmanship is artistic. Style in a chair or table is the all-important thing. A piece of furniture, however simple in design, if it is wrought artistically, stimulates the imagination, arouses the emotions, and provokes endless delight in the connoisseur. We are keen observers to-day, and curious over work done centuries ago. We handle a well-bred piece of furniture with respect as we trace the skill shown in beauty of line; the eye travels joyously over its well-balanced proportions and hovers with admiration over its downright dexterity of carving. No literal copy of antique furniture made in the forcing factories of to-day has feeling in it. It is very accurate in line and detail but it lacks expression, and that is where the artistic spirit enters, that is where the charm holds us. As old Higgery the carpenter explained himself out of it when Lord Louis Lewis complimented him on being the finest carpenter of his age: "Ah, sir," he replied, "Chippendale was the finest cabinet-maker of his age and Sheraton of his; but they went beyond that. They had the Idea. I can use my tools as well as either of them—better, maybe, for 'tis a subtle thing to give a semblance of age to a new piece, but I haven't got the Idea, and never had. If the imagination had gone with the craft, King George might have seen his period of furniture as well as any of the others."

Chippendale and Sheraton were without doubt the cleverest cabinet-makers of their age; but many an unnamed workman of their period has left us the splendid legacy of his "ideas" in furniture which is scattered over the comfortable homes of England, with no pedigree attached except the imprimatur of a master craftsman's genius.

Speaking of artistic furniture, I do not mean elaborate furniture overladen with a heavy ornament which confuses its lines and perverts its beauty into vulgarity. Simplicity is the fairest form of art. Simplicity consists not so much in plainness of production as in singleness of purpose. The essence of simplicity is the absence of self-consciousness. A combination of simplicity of character and great artistic power is difficult to find, but when found it is the most perfect combination and produces finest work. Art is often self-conscious, and quickly runs to seed in superfluous ornamentation. The Louis Quinze style is unwholesome as poison. It is brilliantly clever, but it is fascinatingly demoralizing. It reflects in art the luxury and insincerity, the licentiousness and effeminacy of the age that invented it.

Gaudy and overornamented furniture is teasingly self-conscious, and conceited stuff to live with. Its lines are vulgar and sensuous curves. It is always staring at you, grinning at you, ogling you, and saying, "Observe me, and admire." Just the very character of the frivolous women, the Pompadour and the Du Barri, who ruled the voluptuous Court of Louis XV., and who squandered

the royal revenues in extravagance of art and craft, so that the artist's taste was wasted in riotous designing and the craftsman's skill debased in excesses of ornament.

Sumptuous furniture and splendid apparel are closely wedded together, and cannot be separated with success. If I lived among Louis Quinze furniture I should often see in the room with me ghosts of gallant courtiers, dressed in long silk coats, embellished with gold braid, and vests of rainbow hue, with cravats and ruffs of billowy lace, carrying at their hips a long rapier, and toying with a bejewelled snuff-box as they moved noiselessly with an elegant devil-may-care swagger, mixing with superbly decorated marqueterie cabinets and tables and bronze statuettes and Sèvres china *bleu du roi*; and shadowy ladies of high degree would be there, wearing capacious and flowery dresses and powdered hair, sitting in the chequered light of evening on seats richly upholstered in pale rose Gobelin tapestry, smiling dreamily on the exquisites of the old régime—all of them fatally gifted mortals with manners polished as the hard, shining surface of the parquet floor they gaily tread: the whole scene a vision glorious, composing an harmonious blend of colour, grace, and beauty. Modern men lounging in tweed Norfolk jackets, or dressed sombre in black swallow-tail coats, with a cigarette lolling on their lips, and ladies tailored into close-fitting costumes of neutral tints, however beautiful in themselves, would be completely out of the picture.

A peculiar reason why old furniture is coveted by many people is because it is fashionable and scarce. The quantity that remains in the country, drawn from the homes of our easy-going port-wine-drinking Georgian forefathers, is decreasing, and buyers are increasing, so competition runs riot for really good pieces.

There is plenty of worthless old furniture for sale, as there are worthless "Old Masters" asking for buyers. Americans are the greedy collectors who raid the market with their unlimited dollars and pay sensational prices for the prize pieces to adorn their town houses in New York or Chicago.

Collecting is a fascinating hobby. I have found pleasure hunting for antiques far away from the heated atmosphere of Christie's auction-rooms. The joy of the chase is great, and the habit grows upon you. I have made many enjoyable excursions into the country with a clear-cut object in view which gives zest to the journey. Rummaging through second-hand shops in the back streets of provincial towns or in out-of-the-way villages searching for spoil is an alluring pastime to indulge in, and if you love the country through which you travel for the country's sake you will be very happy on the trail, and want to go again whether much or little plunder falls to your quest. Old cathedral towns yield the best results. There are many sleepy second-hand shops loitering round the cathedral waiting for customers to step in after visiting the sacred fane. There is

much lumber and little treasure in most of them; but if you don't find what you want, in looking for it you may find something that pleases you better, like the man who was digging a hole in his garden to bury a dead dog and unburied a Greek statue of Venus.

Calling at the smart antique dealers' spacious establishments in London is an *édition de luxe* version of the same story. Here choice pieces are assembled, polished and poised adroitly to arrest attention. Some of these elegant salons resemble museums; the surroundings breathe order, calm, refinement. Prices rule high as the aristocratic character of the place you visit.

Nothing is cheap in these sanctuaries of the old nobility of furniture and art treasure except courtesy and affability, which are supplied gratis by the faultlessly accoutred gentleman of the department, who checks you on entering and conducts you round. Any object you look at he explains for your edification. He rivals the showman at Windsor Castle or the Tower of London for knowing his part and throwing at you torrents of information as he strides along. He revels in it, and his importance and intelligence mesmerize you and keep most of your five senses stirring. You admire him as an oracle of antique lore, and listen to him with fear and trembling. His beaming smile encourages you to live, and politely you ask another question.

Here the business of selling is practised as a fine art. The attendant is so well bred, well groomed, so condescending and obliging you feel yourself a criminal if you escape him without making a purchase. You say: "I should like to go back and see that satinwood chair again." "Ah," he replies, "that is a most interesting piece; King Edward often sat in that chair. It belonged to the Hon. Oliver Grimes, a great friend of King Edward; it was the King's favourite seat when he visited the Hon. Oliver at Redcote Manor. And here is the oak table you admired so much as we passed along. We know the pedigree of it. It came from Monkwood Hall, Derbyshire. It has been in possession of the family since the year 1620. We bought it at the Hall last week, and so it has never been in the trade. How beautifully the frieze is carved; what a fine patina it has formed; it shines like a mirror; surely the butler must have polished it every week when he waxed the oak floor. It has never been damaged or repaired; it is genuine all over. It is a precious and faultless piece of Jacobean oak, and the price is only...!"

There are dangers and pitfalls besetting the buyer of old furniture. Even in the garden of antiques a slimy serpent spoils the smiling landscape. Fraud is not unknown side by side with honest dealing. Not all furniture is old as it looks. That is where that predatory rascal called the faker creeps in and preys upon humanity in general and the innocent amateur in particular.

There are sly manufactories of old furniture busy to-day in shoddy workshops, building up immaculate high-grade chairs, tables, cabinets, out of odd-

ments of oak and mahogany collected from the scrap-heap of broken and decayed furniture. New wood is added in parts where necessary to complete the transformation, and when these modern antiques are blended, stained to harmonize in colour, and a glowing patina rubbed on by the artful dodgers, it takes a keen eye to detect the villainy of the deed, as that arch-swindler Gaspero Bandini said to his fellow-conspirator: "We must make it as antique as possible: we must sell the old wine with the dust on the bottle."

There is no fixed market value to old furniture as there is to postage-stamps or War Loan stock. The dealer sets his own price on his goods, and the cupidity of the public guides him how best to do it. He is a keen observer of human nature, and plays up to its little weaknesses for his own advantage, and he does it smilingly.

It is wonderful how environment works on our feelings and baffles our judgment. In the twinkling of an eye it changes the value we place on things. Dress the same man in two different suits of clothes, and you have all the difference in our cursory opinion between a lord and a tinker. The same article exhibited in shop-windows East or West of London changes its value appreciably, and we are blindly content to buy in the dearest market if it is the most elegant, and fancy we get full value for money.

I know a man in Florence who wanted an old Tuscan table, and he padded round the city looking for one. In a small shop where much furniture was crowded into little space he saw the article that pleased him. The dealer asked twenty-four pounds for it. He tried to beat down the price, but the dealer would not humour him, so he left without buying. Presently a large dealer in antiques entered the shop, fancied the table, and paid twenty-four pounds for it straightway, and removed it to his own premises, which are spacious and commanding. The man in quest of a Tuscan table visited the spacious premises and saw the table in its grander home, fell in love with it again, and bought it for forty pounds. Afterward he told the dealer in the small shop that he had found the table he wanted at Mr. So-and-so's, and, quite elated, he described his purchase. "Yes, I know about it," replied the rejected dealer. "You have paid forty pounds for the table I offered to sell you for twenty-four." The buyer looked foolish, and said: "But it was so much better displayed at Mr. So-and-so's shop that I did not recognize it being the same table; it looked worth twenty pounds more in his place than it did in yours."

The auction-mart frequently governs the price of old furniture and gives it an upward lift. The psychology of the auction-room is an interesting study. The loaded atmosphere of the place has a compelling influence that gets the better of one's judgment. In a shop a man scoffs at the tall price of a piece of furniture and haggles doggedly with the dealer to reduce it thirty shillings; in the auction-room

if the same piece were offered he would compete with the crowd to raise the price of it incontinently. It is the consistent conduct of inconsistent human nature. It is that bellicose little devil who hides himself at the bottom of every human being, impelling him down into the danger zone to fight, who is guilty of the rash and feckless deed. A man enters the auction-room in a happy, breezy frame of mind, not to buy, just to look on and see what things are fetching. The serpent of the place tempts him, and he is a lost soul. His good resolutions evaporate like water on a hot plate, leaving no trace behind. The fighting impulse in him leaps up, and he bids and bids again, and eventually he finds himself the possessor of a rare old mahogany bureau hatched in the reign of our King George, but inadvertently described in the catalogue as a masterpiece of the cabinet-maker's craft composed in the times of Queen Anne!

IX

THE LURE OF PERSONALITY

Personal influence is a subtle impalpable sovereign power that man possesses; sometimes it possesses the man, for influence often is an unconscious element in his life which exhales from him like the fragrance from a flower or miasma from a swamp. You cannot investigate it. It is moral force. Some men possess much of it, others less, the residue of mankind none. That is the mystery of influence. You cannot regulate it, calculate it, or tabulate it in standard quantities. Its operation is noiseless as a shadow, dangerous as lightning, profound as eternity, beautiful as the five wise virgins, or devilish as Mephistopheles.

We speak here of personal influence. There is an influence of a baser sort which is powerful in its way—the influence of money. Money is extraneous matter. Wealth magnifies a man in people's eyes, but the man himself may be small without the money inflation. Strip the rich man of his shekels, and you strip him of his significance. He counts no more than an empty egg-shell after the rats have eaten the meat out of it. Frequently the extraordinary man is only an ordinary man placed in extraordinary circumstances.

There is also the influence of position. That is not the genuine article. It is alien honour conferred like the odour of attar of roses clinging to an empty earthen jar. Position gives power. Some people who sit in the chair of authority

use their power to the full, but it is the power of position, not of character or individuality. The only advantage of power is to be able to do more good than other people. All the world knows the difference, the ghastly difference, between Cardinal Wolsey in favour and Cardinal Wolsey in disgrace. Catastrophe lies between these extremes of fortune. The man remains the same in both states, but the world moves with the times, and gives no credit to an overrun banking account. He is a fallen star. He drops out of the seventh heaven of popularity into abysmal darkness. Banished the Royal presence, who cares for Cardinal Wolsey? He has no favours to transmit. No man is his friend, for he can befriend no man. Position makes and unmakes a man, like sunshine makes or unmakes a summer day.

Influence of truest and finest brand is personal. It emanates from the man, not from his circumstances. Some men handle their fellow-creatures with dexterity and ease, like an experienced whip controls the horse he sits behind. Quietness and firmness are in the human touch, and the animal bends submissively to every movement of the reins; so some men command their fellow-creatures, and they submit their wills to the master mind that rides them, and how the spell governs they cannot say. Other men are ciphers in society. "Only Mr. So-and-so" consigns a man to the outposts of social extinction, and mixes him up with the unclassified masses of limp, negligible, and insignificant people who welter and gambol with their kennel companions, but they cannot head the pack on hunting days.

Influential men are not common in the community. Only the elect few shine; many are reflectors of borrowed light. Influence is a gift. It is caught, not taught. It is all decided for us when nestlings in the cradle, and perhaps before we nestle. The schoolboy unconsciously wields a mystic power in the playground, and his chums hover round him as king of the revels. Animal magnetism exudes from every pore of his youthful skin. He leads in every escapade, and others fall in without question. He is not taught the trick; it comes natural for him to lead as for the rank and file to follow.

On what principle Nature bestows her favours it is difficult to hazard, more difficult than to discover what principle guides the British Government in distributing her coveted decorations to the British public. Nature is romantic. Exercising her sovereignty she gives her honours as she pleases. No money can buy them. Blue-blooded pedigrees have no preferential tariff. Nature mocks our conventionality, spurns our orders of merit, and winks at our social somebodies. Often she openly prefers a costermonger to a King—stamps aristocratic grace on a gipsy, and refuses it to a Duchess. There are insignificant great men who would be hustled in a crowd if they wore no badge, while to social nobodies Nature attaches a halo of distinction which the crowd delights to honour as subjects offer

incense to a King.

Personality is an attribute that carries a man far on the road to success. Personality is an endowment which proclaims a man one of Nature's aristocrats. It is Nature's advertisement of her best, and she is proud of her handiwork. Personality is a fascinating asset; it lends dignity to common clay; it gives a man a standing outside the crowd, which he occupies with ineffable content and full advantage to himself. Some people have "an air" about them, and the atmosphere they move in is intoxicating to those dwelling under the spell of their presence. You cannot crush people who have personality. Over and over again it turns the scales in their favour in the competitions of life. Their virtues may not be of the celestial, their talent may lack glitter, but their personality grips you with its pomp and splendour, and they sit amongst the mighty, imposing themselves on gods and men. The envious man admits their success, and slurringly says: "They are commonplace: there is nothing astonishing in them except their success." He consoles himself with the banal reflection that, other things being equal, he is quite as good as they. But the strange mystery of presence steps in and prevents other things ever being equal.

Some men lack engaging personality, they have no physical charm or force, yet they exert strenuous influence. They possess great mental or moral qualities. There is a Divine spark in the clay that scintillates and collects attention. They are luminous bodies, and emit light. They are men with virtue in them, and virtue flows out of them. The extremely fascinating character of Jesus Christ moves in splendour adown the ages, giving out vital energy. It draws men to-day irresistibly, as it constrained men nearly two thousand years ago to follow Him homeless and penniless through the highways and by-ways of Palestine, without worldly honour or pay to recompense them. There is a strange, silent, penetrating, perplexing, yet mighty influence working round about us; it is the influence of the life of Christ holding us up. I do not mean His life as crudely reflected to us in the modern Church. Jesus Christ has a larger influence outside the Church than in it. Christ would be a stranger in the sanctuary to-day if He visited it as the peasant of Galilee.

Jesus Christ never commissioned His disciples to build up in the world such a colossal organization as the Church has swollen itself into with windy pride. In every country in Europe the Church is the biggest business concern and the wealthiest institution, the most aristocratic society and the most retrogressive force. The national Churches are slavishly worldly and chastely genteel concerns; they would boycott the kingdom of Christ if they thought it were trying to enter the world through their gilded gates.

The kingdom of Christ is democratic. It might interfere with tithes and endowments and vested interests. I fancy Christ will establish His kingdom

without calling in the Church to help Him. I could not picture Christ making use of a Bishop in knee-breeches, lawn sleeves, and with a seat in the House of Lords, when engaging disciples to evangelize the world. But I can picture Christ falling speechless when brought face to face with a Bishop geared in full canonical uniform; and if in His ignorance of ecclesiastical functionaries Jesus politely inquired, "Who is the aristocratic old gentleman wearing knee-breeches and a broad-brimmed hat, and to what institution does he belong?" on being told he was speaking to one of the leading representatives of His own spiritual institution, I can picture Christ melting away in anguish of heart from the venerable presence of the great divine to solace Himself in the company of fishermen and mechanics—men whose hearts are warm and manners natural, even if their creed is a bit unorthodox from the ecclesiastical standpoint.

And there is the good St. Francesco, the stainless and blameless saint, born of the little Tuscan hill city, the perpetual flowering rose of Assisi, whose godly fragrance gives off for ever to sweeten the life of mankind—St. Francis of Assisi, the humble child of God, the dear brother of men, dead these five hundred years gone by; but he is now lying warm upon the lap of Christendom, nursed for one of the noblest, gentlest spirits, aglow with the fervour of an endless life. He is a living, controlling force to-day in the world's long battle for righteousness, and ever pouring into our ears the sweetness of Christ.

Men are governed more wisely by the dead than by the living. Interned within the calmness of their shades, the mighty dead speak to us, and no cross-currents of envy, prejudice, or malice ruffle the serenity of their counsel. Influence is not always beneficent; it is malignant sometimes, and contaminates like the plague. Evil qualities can be as attractive as wholesome virtues. The poets brand the Devil with a commanding personality. John Wilkes, the notorious demagogue in the reign of George III., was the ugliest man in England, yet he impressed himself marvellously on his generation. He was a popular hero; he possessed natural gaiety of disposition and an irrepressible fund of impudence and wit. He was the most brilliant controversialist of his day. He was a charming rake with an insinuating smile, and he wore the manners of a fine English gentleman, which captivated his enemies and conciliated the King. He had exceptional powers of fascination, and he boasted that—ugly as he was—with the start of a quarter of an hour he could get the better of any man, however good-looking, in

the graces of any lady.

X

THE LURE OF NICE PEOPLE

Our friend Mrs. Alinson took me sharply in hand one day, and tendered me good advice gratuitously over the tea-table. Mrs. Alinson is a lady magnificent in bulk, energetic in action, torrential in tongue, and warm-hearted in disposition, second to none amongst the daughters of men.

When as a young man I first came to town she adopted me, mothered me socially, and manoeuvred for my success. She did not approve of my associates, and rated me soundly in her loud, pushful, stridulant voice, which commands attention: "Mr. Drake is not a desirable acquaintance for you to pursue, my dear. He don't belong to our set, and his reputation is tainted; unpleasant rumours cloud round his name. Take my advice and cut him. You only want to know nice people."

Shrewd, disinterested, motherly advice for Mrs. Alinson to bestow on a tenderfoot unfamiliar with the pitfalls of society. Surely only a lady of sweet discerning disposition could give it; a lady whom everybody loves and whom nobody gainsays; a lady the final arbiter of taste in "nice people" who opens the door to a new-comer and no man shuts, who shuts the door on a new-comer and no man opens. I accepted her dictum as good current coin of the elect world we moved in, to be honoured without reserve. Its metal rang genuine on the social counter. Mr. Drake henceforth is a stranger to me; it would imperil my position in society to know him.

After tea we parted, and I went to the cinema. I often go to a cinema because it amuses me when I want amusement. It is light and inexpensive diversion. Superior people sneer at the cinema, and call it low-grade amusement: a common glanty-show that pleases common people. However, as I have no shares in music-halls or wasting investments in theatre-land, I am impartial in my pleasures, and can take a shilling seat in a picture palace with clean conscience and merry heart. In the cinema we met our dear friend Lady —, who was enjoying the moving pictures. She invited us to her reception on the following Saturday afternoon; at the conclusion of the show, when parting from her, she said: "It's very kind of

you to promise for next Saturday. Please don't tell Mrs. Alinson you are coming, or she will be sure to come too, and I don't want her. The friends I am inviting don't care to meet her."

This was a staggering blow struck at the serene goddess to whom we bent the obedient knee. Was there another social kingdom where she had no sovereignty, where her passing shadow, like a malign influence, was a thing to be shunned? Was she a false goddess, or no goddess at all? She pictured herself the controlling hand which steered the current of gay life in our midst. Was she at the helm, or was it a mild illusion that muddled her amiable brain? Here are people actually who will not open their doors to receive her, nor permit her feet to tread their dusty carpet—and she thought omnipotence was in her nod.

These colliding facts perplexed us. They suggested the ridiculous, and offer food for reflection on the comedy of human manners. Here, on the one hand, is a portrait we draw of ourselves, and there opposite hangs on the wall a portrait other people draw of us. Place these two sketches side by side and consider, do they represent the same person? Is there resemblance between them enough to establish identity in a British court of law? How can there be? We do not see ourselves as others see us. We each observe the interesting object that engages our attention from different points of the compass. We see our good points of character and make the best of them; our neighbours detect our little sins and make the worst of them. So we clothe ourselves in sunlight and paint our neighbours drab. Mrs. Alinson, fortunate woman, had no glimmering idea what other people thought of her; it was not given her to see herself as others see her. She lives stolidly; eats, drinks, dresses, talks, surrounded by a shining halo of self-complacency through which her mentality cannot penetrate. She is good-natured, thinks excellently of herself, and believes other people's feelings towards her are equally well disposed. You and I, happily, are unconscious of the quaint esteem in which our neighbours hold us, and wisely there we ring the curtain down. If the truth were told, half our acquaintances are our enemies—behind our backs.

Soon after the split in the Liberal party on the first Home Rule Bill, which sundered so many political friendships, Frank Holl was painting the portrait of John Bright. He mentioned to his sitter that he was about to paint the portrait of Mr. Gladstone. "It must be a very painful thing to you, Mr. Bright," he hazarded, "that after all these years of comradeship you two should sever your connection?" "Indeed it is," replied Bright with a sigh; "to think that after we have so long worked together we should be forced apart in the evening of our lives! And by what? A bogey that has risen up within him, beckoning him away from duty and sense. Do you know, Mr. Holl, I seriously fear that my dear old friend's mind is giving way."

When the artist was at Hawarden painting Mr. Gladstone, the subject of Mr. Bright's portrait cropped up. "Ah!" said Mr. Gladstone, "and how did you find him?" "Fairly well; and he spoke very affectionately of you, Mr. Gladstone." "Did he indeed?" replied the sitter sorrowfully. "It was a cruel blow that parted us—and on so clear a question, too! Tell me, Mr. Holl"—and here his lips quivered, for he was evidently moved with strong emotion—"tell me, did you notice anything in the manner of my old friend which would lead you to suppose that his reason was becoming unhinged?"

We cannot see another man's personality in full rounded vision. We get peeps at him; broken lights and flickering shadows of his character dance before us. We chase the shadow, and think we can capture the man and rifle him of his every locked-up thought and uncover his soul's nakedness.

The popular writer analyzes, probes, dissects human character on paper, and we marvel at his subtlety in reading so far into people. He plucks the gay plumage off the poor bird he has trapped, and leaves the stripped and quivering body an unpleasant spectacle for the public to contemplate through the glass case of a six-shilling novel. The novelist is a crude, fumbling workman at his trade. His hand is too clumsy for his tools. He dissects his paper dolls as they pass before him in a paper world, but the tangled, unbalanced, erratic human being pulsing with mystic life, even his next-door neighbour, baffles him on the doorstep. The novelist is a cunning artist, but an unskilful philosopher. He works like Conan Doyle's great detective Sherlock Holmes, who can unravel any mystery he himself concocts in the pages of the *Strand Magazine*, but is no use to Scotland Yard in tracking a real murderer or laying bare an elusive crime.

If some famous men who in their day and generation lived in cheap houses and mixed with common people, and died unparaphrased in daily papers, could see themselves now, as we see them, promoted to illustrious companionship with the mighty dead, their heads would spin with amazement at themselves for having arrived in splendour; they would stagger at the worship paid them by reverent posterity.

During life they were great artists in mufti. They were regarded as unimportant persons by their own contemporaries, and to-day they are posted amongst the demi-gods of history. They knew themselves to be good workmen who did a good day's work for a fair day's pay, and then, like other honest day-labourers, at nightfall, with clean consciences, they laid down their tools, and their life-story ended there. They little knew that they had the bud of immortality swelling in their veins, soon to break and flower into endless renown.

Human nature is a conundrum to itself hard to crack, as it is to other people, even its friends and neighbours who eat and drink with it at table. We do not know that heaps of posthumous fame may presently cover our strange next-door

neighbour. To us he is only a negligible quantity in the affairs of the day, with a little gift of the pen or some queer scientific hobby that absorbs him. In this swift age of ours Time and Space are being brought to heel in masterly control, but our neighbours remain mysterious to us as Adam was to Eve until the affair of the apple found the man out. Even Shakespeare to his contemporaries did not appear a towering genius, but only one of themselves—a common literary hack with an uncommon gift of turning a sentence and making it tell. It was a trick they all tried to catch from him, but he just went one better than they.

Shakespeare's fellow-craftsmen were unconscious that they were entertaining an archangel unawares. Nothing he said or did outside his scribbling for the playhouse is on record. He had no trusty Boswell at his elbow to note his pothouse wit and succulent wisdom, sparks from the fire of his genius, flung off impromptu in merry moments at the Mermaid Tavern over a flagon of malmsey. His pals thought him a jovial fellow well met, and when he died no crumbs of biography were swept up by loving hands to keep his memory green.

But strangest of all, did Shakespeare think much of himself? He was utterly careless of the fate of his own literary labours. He never published one of his own plays. After his death the stage copies of his plays were carefully collected together by two prudent men, Heming and Condell, with an eye to business. Seven years later the first folio edition of Shakespeare's plays appeared in print. The first edition is full of glaring blunders, compiled as it was from the stage versions—the manuscripts that the players used in the theatres. Those well-thumbed dog-eared copies of the plays, very interesting documents to own if one could be placed on the market to-day: worn and torn, scored with erasures, interlined with emendations, stained with spilt wine and small beer, greasy with handling of midnight study, and crumpled after pouching in the players' pockets cheek by jowl with incongruous trifles—could you expect literary finish to adorn these fugitive children of the playhouse? Ever since that day learned commentators have laboured assiduously correcting the text of the plays and combing out the tangle, quarrelling fraternally amongst themselves over the correct word for the place and the correct place for a word. The quarrel of the commentators still flourishes, for the muddle of the text has yet to be tidied up.

XI

THE LURE OF THE NEW DEMOCRACY

Democracy is the rising star, mounting clear and bright over falling kingdoms and toppling empires. Crowns are going cheap in the market to-day, and the divine right of kings is a broken weapon flung in the mud of the world's scorn and picked up as a toy for *Punch* to provoke laughter. The old nobility is losing its ancient charter to sit exclusive in the high places of honour, and the common people—the new caste—are coming into possession and power. The working-man must be tailored to the grand part he plays in history. He will feel uneasy perhaps wearing his first new dress suit—it will worry him like a misfit. But clothes add splendour to our common lot. With the salvation of the country dependent on his nod he must cast the stodgy cloth cap that clowns his head on bank holidays and nod heroically to the admirers who retinue his movements.

Democracy is the unknown god it will be fashionable to worship when the war is over. Now we are all wasting ink and paper and taxing our small brains prophesying what the world will be like in the flowering-time of peace, when everybody will become deliriously happy, wise, and good. We shall move more cautiously then, like a cat stepping circumspectly over broken glass on top of the garden wall. We will make no mistakes, as we did in the feckless past, bringing us not only bleeding feet, but wounded hearts. There must be no party politics in the land as there used to be when politicians sold their country to buy their party into power, and sold themselves to keep the power which they had bought. Everyone will want to do good to his neighbour, and our neighbour will want to do good to himself, and so social reform now and henceforth is the compelling idea that holds the public fancy.

But no two social reformers think alike or advance the same doctrines of reform, although the same idea dominates the mind of all the doctrinaires. An idea is an abstract, invisible, impalpable, thing that enters into the mind of man naked and unadorned. Before exposing this naked idea to public observation it must be clothed and attractively dressed. Confusion comes in with the clothes. Fashions in clothes differ so that the same idea differently dressed appears to be a different object. However, it is not. Ideas do not differ: it is the expression of them that differs. It is when you clothe your idea with words and deck it in literary plumage that the mischief stalks in and divergent opinions clash and confound us.

We all believe in Utopia, but none of us hold the clue to the high road that gallops straight into it. We take trial trips over new ground and get sloughed up on false trails. Plato and Socrates, Francesco d'Assisi and Philip Sydney, Ruskin and Tolstoi, have each been famous architects of Utopia in the dim dreamland of the past, and each propounded his own scheme as being the very healthiest and happiest earthly paradise ever constructed for man to dwell in. They all have some aims and ends in common, considering thoughtfully the welfare of

the people bodily and morally: but the distinctive personality of the architect slyly creeps in, and on the rock of personal vanity they split into rival factions and a general quarrel ensues, rending the best-laid schemes man ever devised for the emancipation of the human race. And so the egg of social reform gets addled before it is hatched, and alas! the glittering city of ten thousand joys for mankind to dwell in recedes farther and farther into the sweet dreamland of the future.

One architect of Utopia proposes to upbuild the city of Human Happiness by hand labour. Brick by brick it is to rise in colossal proportions and flowering beauty. He starts with the individual as the foundation and finishes with the individual as top-stone. He works by gradual and peaceful process to attain his splendid purpose. His method of work is unpopular because it is slow.

Another architect proposes to work by machinery, and to force it to a hasty finish. Organization and legislation are the instruments of torture proposed for the rapid promotion of his purpose. Human society—social and industrial—is stricken with fell disease, which can be cured promptly by Acts of Parliament and Orders in Council. By this drastic method the "organic welfare" of society is to be builded while you wait. The State is to be organized, thought is to be organized, the will is to be organized, and happiness is to be organized, and nothing of consequence is to be left unorganized; while the mere individual is to be wiped from the map as an unnecessary dot of disfigurement upon it. Wealth is to be handled by a new and better process; wealth is to be conscripted, which means one man is to make it and another man is to take it. Labour is not to be dealt with as a marketable commodity. It is an insult to the dignity of labour to measure a man's work and pay him exactly what his day's toil is worth in the market. The working-man is a member of the universal brotherhood, and needs elbow-room in the community to spread himself. He must have the wages he hankers after, and when too weary to work a pension granted from the State to make comfortable his latter end. In fact in Utopia every man, woman, and child claims sufficient income independent of work, and the State must be Paymaster-General.

Alas! universal happiness on these idealistic lines of compulsion and greed is like an echo. It answers your call but does not come. Socialism makes no progress in saving men; it has eyes to see man's misery, but no hands to lift him out of it.

The longer I live the more I am convinced that this great and vital problem of social regeneration is to be engineered only by slow gradations and with infinite patience and gentleness. Society is composed of dense masses and millions of frail, erring human beings, and to schedule a sudden inrush of perfect laws on the statute-book will not breed an improved strain of perfect citizens who can live up to the pose of perfection. You cannot legislate selfishness and weakness

and greediness and vice out of human nature quickly, as you wring dirty water out of a wet sponge; neither can you pump purity and patience and brotherly love into humanity by Act of Parliament, and out of such shoddy material weave an ideal State in one round of the clock. Perfect laws are scarce as perfect men. Laws will grow better as we grow better—gradually. Laws and men act and react upon one another in mystic collusion. The great incoming tide of righteousness which shall fill all things will fill them. You cannot complete and furnish the top floor of the Palace of Humanity before you have laid the foundation solidly and deep on the rock of righteousness.

Labour has not yet won its charter of rights because it has neglected to perform its role of duties. Labour has to look the social problem squarely in the face with both eyes open. At present it only opens one eye—the eye which sees magnificently its rights. The other eye is shut which should observe its duties. The eye of Labour that should see its duties is sealed in darkness. The scales of Justice must balance truly before mankind is happy ever more.

Free labour is as necessary a commodity as free sunshine in a well-balanced State. If a man does his work well and does not require so much beer and tobacco and time for football as another man, he should be free to dispose of his labour as he chooses, without being picketed or bludgeoned by lewd fellows of the baser sort. Until there prevail an all-round correct idea of work, legislation will be a dead letter. God has not made one sun to shine on wages and another on capital, nor has He made two varieties of justice. He is God over all of us, and His law is impartial justice.

Capital is not immaculate. It sits the great god incarnate on its high gold throne, ruling men with sovereign power and using men as a means to wealth. Its vestments are of purple and fine linen. Costly raiment to wear, but unseemly smirched with the mud of gutter complots and stained red with blood sweated from the poor. Capital wants washing thoroughly from its iniquity and purging with hyssop before it is fragrant and can discourse virtue to the working classes.

Capital and Labour must forgive each the sins of the past, and as Brains and Hands work together in mutual confidence and esteem. Brains and Hands are not hard-set hereditary foes. They are blood relatives, members of the same body-politic, and must hold together for their common good. They are not even business opponents with clashing interests spoiling to cut each other's throat and smash the opposition concern with fiery glee of heart. They are copartners in the same business concern, and must combine, each having their own department to superintend. The interest of one is the interest of the other. If one department breaks, the other falls with it deep in disaster. Yet these two copartners of the same business firm are hating one another with a hot historical hatred that defies the flight of ages. They are locked together struggling for mastery, each hoping

to throw the other and become top-dog and dictate new terms of partnership which never would be kept, for the articles of treaty would soon become merely "a scrap of paper." It is not conquest: it is co-operation that will bring peace and concord between Capital and Labour.

The world is ripe for a new social programme. The war has altered the map of Europe, and it will alter the map of men's minds. The war has swept away old crusted conventions which cobwebbed the mind, and false foundations of social science upon which men laboured vainly to build Utopia. These things must be reassessed at new values.

The working-man wanted to get in the sun and own his patch as a free and independent citizen. There is no such thing in the world as independence, complete and arrogant: either in art, science, revolting daughters or commerce. Independence is a fool's word or an anarchist's battle-cry. The nearest approach to it in the realm of reality is interdependence. Substitute this word "interdependence" in the place of the other insolent and erroneous one and you have a working proposition, for you establish a sense of justice between man and man, and you have gathered together raw material out of which to build a new heaven and a new earth.

A pre-war panacea for curing the ills of unrighteousness which blight society was the amelioration of environment—a sonorous, windy, academic platitude having more sound in it than sense. It was the pet scheme for manufacturing good citizens out of bad ones; it began at the outward condition of mankind and worked inward. It started with the barber, the schoolmaster, and the politician. By pursuing this method they started with folly and ended with failure. It is like telling a man to polish his boots when his heart wants cleaning. The favourite speculation of theorists was that perfect circumstances create perfect character. This is attractive reading in cheap handbooks of political economy for the working classes, but in this wicked world it fails to pan out when put to a working test. It is more important a man should start by mending himself, and his circumstances will quickly mend themselves.

To expect by flattening down inequalities, removing temptations, and giving everybody a living wage of £2 per week, England will flower into a Garden of Eden where people are all good and happy and pay no taxes, and where angels will come and converse with us in the cool of the day, is to expect the impossible. To expect by adapting the lot to man instead of adapting man to his lot you will create an earthly paradise out of a world of wickedness is to expose your ignorance of human nature and to admit your incapacity for adjusting its wrongs.

They tell us that in the New Democracy patriotism will be scrapped. Love of country is a parochial virtue; it will be swamped in the greater love of humanity which will rise like a swelling flood and cover all. In the new Garden of Eden

we shall be a happy brotherhood, for the dangerous serpent will be scotched. This doctrine is maudlin sentimentalism with a tang of grotesque to flavour it. Humanity is an immense crowd to fall in love with *en bloc*; each individual will receive a very thin slice of your affection if all the world is to share in it alike. Love will die of starvation fed on these lean rations. As a *padre* fresh from the Front persuasively raps out the truth, "the would-be cosmopolitan who will not narrow himself to love of country is rarely capable of any real self-devotion to the international ideal which he worships. The lover of humanity is more often than not utterly miserable travelling in a third-class railway-carriage."

Patriotism must survive as a national virtue, however violently the universal brotherhood flourishes, because the love of country is founded on the love of home and family, and the love of home and family is founded on the love of a man and a woman. You can never get over this nature-logic while men and women remain human beings with natural instincts which draw them to love one another and preserve the family feeling. I would rather be the victim of every insular prejudice possible than have no British prejudices to stir my British blood.

Another hope of the ages that has failed us in the hour of need is the Church. If all other saviours of society failed there remained the Church as by law established to rely upon as the great regenerating power in the land. Alas! the Church in our midst cannot cast out evil spirits. It has lost the gift of healing through respectability. It worships an ancient creed instead of the living Christ. Jesus of Nazareth is the great International Democrat of history. He was a tradesman's son and a working carpenter Himself. This fact shocks respectability. How many more people would be Christians if Christ had been born in a palace and not in a stable! This is the unsavoury feature of religion, and the exclusive dignitaries of the Church hover round it dubiously. They admit the historic fact with candour, but slither away silently from its indelicate associations as far as decency permits.

We have been told that bishops in gaiters and aprons harmonize daintily with the quiet cathedral close, shadowed by immemorial elms and the other minor glories of the Establishment; but bishops in gaiters do seem badly placed in a carpenter's shop, where their Lord and Master served His 'prentice years. The apron is an ancient figment of clothing bishops now wear in common with the working carpenter at his bench. It is a kind of retaining badge, signalling their humble origin and ancient descent.

Bishops, in general, are cultured and amiable men, more renowned for their learning than their piety. They are appointed by the State, and form the executive of the ecclesiastical machine to run the traditional piety of the land. They sometimes quarrel amongst themselves as to who is orthodox and who is not

on the episcopal bench—quarrelling amongst bishops is only a human diversion—but touching the righteousness which is in the law they are all blameless men. There is something faulty in the religion they inculcate, for it does not grip the people. It is dreamy; it is not real. It is the vague pursuit of an unknown god ranging through a maze of decorative ritual and symbol, and there remain great arid spaces in our nature which it never fills up.

It has been said that the visible Church stands in the way of spiritual enlightenment of the people, just as stone idols of the heathen stand in the way of apprehension of God. What the eye sees before it the mind settles down upon, and roams no farther searching for a fuller vision of spiritual truth. The savage sees his stone idol, and never thinks beyond it religiously. It was his father's god, and it is god enough for him.

The good Churchman is equally content to know nothing beyond the religious ceremonials which the Church ordains in the place of God, the Spiritual Father of us all. These ceremonials, sanctified by long observance, quenched the religious thirst of his forefathers, and they quench his thirst and he is satisfied. The Church is tenacious of her hold on men, not suffering the allegiance of the people to be shifted back to God the Father. The Church is said to be the one and only sacred aqueduct through which Divine grace can flow. The curse of the community is the middleman. He takes a heavy toll of profit in every business that feeds the people bodily or spiritually.

The New Democracy must return to the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth to lay a solid foundation on which to build social righteousness and national greatness. The secret elements of social rectitude slumber in the words of Christ, and the volcanic action of the war will blast them into life and power.

Jesus Christ was not a theologian or schoolman of the fossil type of Gamaliel or Calvin, learned in booklore, but ignorant of men. He was not a stump orator inflaming the radical passions of the masses, bating them into red fury by pictorially describing the wickedness of the classes. He proposed no easy road to riches as a trap to catch the envious poor. He did not sit in his study formulating a scientific creed to mystify people with a religion of words and phrases; He lived in the open air a noble life that men could see and believe in. It is the mind, not the soul, that asks a creed to help its faith; the heart believes without the crutches of theological formula to support it. He stood for goodness pure and simple, for rich men and poor men alike. His teaching is exemplified in His life, and His life is a beautiful and faithful commentary on His teaching.

The careless world did not relish this straight talk on goodness—indoor and outdoor goodness. It was too realistic, too personal in its touch; but men are growing sensible now as the world grows older, and with reawakened conscience ask for the truth instead of its theological counterfeit, which does not heal the

wounded spot. Out of the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth grow eternal principles that build up the best governments and the wisest laws, that train the finest citizens, and regulate society on a basis of righteousness and mutual honour. The seeds of all possible national prosperity and generous manhood lie embedded in these teachings. Nations may rise, flourish, and decay, but the nation with the blood of Christ in its veins is immortal and shall endure for ever. May it be the British nation!

XII

JESUS CHRIST THE LURE OF THE AGES

Jesus Christ is the lure of the ages. He is the most interesting figure in history. History says little about Him, yet that little means much to us. It whets the appetite for more knowledge. The little is distinctly fascinating; what would be a full record of His sayings and doings, suppose such a narrative displayed in faded manuscript were unearthed from the musty archives of an old Eastern monastery and brought to daylight in the twentieth century? The fragmentary record that we hold is sufficiently vital to have kept His memory green for nearly two thousand years. What a glorious find a continuation of the wonderful story would be to those hungering for larger knowledge of their Lord's earthly life!

Jesus Christ is the unplaced figure in history. He occupies no niche in the secular temple of Fame. No historian of the country in which He lived paged His name amongst the worthies of the age or gave it mention in a footnote of history. Outside the covers of the Sacred Book Jesus Christ is an unknown quantity. During His lifetime the insignificance of the movement He promoted in Galilee was unworthy of serious attention from the authorities. His disciples were men of obscure origin, a mere handful of ignorant peasants and fishermen, rated as misguided, harmless fanatics following a crazy leader to oblivion, the foreordained end of a madman's escapade. Others before Him had started forth on the splendid expedition to set the world in order and were interrupted in the performance of their formidable task. It was towering madness to suppose permanent results could follow a single-handed fight against the world; to think that He could disturb the well-founded authority of King Herod or challenge Cæsar seated in purple power on the seven hills of Rome: as likely He might uproot the seven hills themselves which cradle the imperial city on their nursing-lap. Yet

to-day He ranks above all competing heroes and overlords earth and heaven in the compelling influence His solitary life imposes on the world's activities, and that influence is only just beginning to be felt by us; eventually it will succeed in refashioning the world after His own heart and conforming it to the likeness of His own image.

Jesus Christ is the lonely figure in history. He launched His mission on the world without human patronage to give it a winning start. Illustrious men of the age did not do Him reverence, nor contribute their sympathy and support to stiffen His cause; they were frankly hostile to Him. He had no family influence to help Him in the great adventure; His ancestry was illustrious, but His relatives were poor and uninfluential folk; His father was a village tradesman. He was not a University man distinguished in letters to gain the ear of the cultured classes. He had no well-to-do friends to back Him either socially or financially. No man ever stood more remote from the world's conventional smile than He did. He was a rank outsider. He battled onward through resisting foes, upholding the shining truth as a sun-bright banner for brave men to rally round and fight for the kingdom of God and the empire of good souls on earth. He dwelt in spiritual isolation, for a mighty purpose cut Him off from the current influences of His time. The world's cold stare was the freezing recognition given Him, and it chilled the finer sensibilities of His loving nature.

There was nothing professional about Jesus Christ. He was not a place-seeker. He held no office in Church or State. He was a plain citizen, plainly dressed. His manner was simple and natural and without side. His speech was of the people; He was one of the crowd. No glittering halo aureoled His brow, promoting Him beyond His brethren. As a prophet, appearances were dead against Him. Why should He rise above his class-level and teach His betters and superiors high morality and spiritual truth? He had no crumbs of learning Himself—how could He feed others out of an empty basket? He had never studied in the schools and won academic distinction! Surely He overstepped Himself. His neighbours resented His common everyday look, easy manner, and arrogant pretensions. These things did not mix well together. They denounced His new, strange teachings as dangerous to the community; He was an unchartered, restless demagogue, roaming the country, disturbing the public weal. They scoffed at this common villager and His idle dream of founding a kingdom of righteousness built on the dregs of humanity, and derisively asked "When shall this kingdom come?"

Now, John the Baptist, hermit of the wilderness, was a prophet after their own heart. He played up to their ideal. He quickened their hot imagination. He was aglow with colour. He was a human tornado. His defiant attitude, eccentric apparel, and mystic fervour, were vividly picturesque; they caught the eye

and compelled attention. He was an untamed child of the desert; he stood aloof from the common crowd. Even high-toned Pharisees were glamoured by his romantic pose. They listened raptly to his fiery message, and were fascinated by his insolent tongue and audacious words shot bolt-straight at them. His hearers staggered whilst he thundered burning condemnations on their smug sins and sordid lives; they writhed in agony as he lifted them from their feet and suspended them over the bottomless pit, choking in sulphurous fumes ascending from the fires of the damned below. Such ghastly presentment of the truth after the good old method of the prophets churned up the muddy depths of their polluted hearts. It converted the masses quickly, as a visitation of the plague could drop a panicky city to its knees, and when the excitement slowed down be as quickly forgotten as a nine-days' wonder out of fashion. The religious revival subsided like the froth blown off by the welcome wind of a new excitement. The emotions of a day spent down on the banks of the Jordan with John the Baptist, the idol of the people, were exhilarating, and something to be remembered for a lifetime by these hard-headed old Jews, and an interesting story to tell their children's children in years to come. The ministry of Jesus was not effervescent in character. He could have stormed men's imaginations with flaming pomp and splendour; He could have ridden a chariot of fire attended by thunder and lightning as running footmen to announce His presence, but men's hearts would have been unmelted by such fierce demonstrations of power. It might have awoken astonishment and intoxicated them into religious frenzy, but afterward it would have left behind a nasty chill on the heart.

Jesus Christ had no official position in the Church as a teacher. He had no mandate from the powers that be to carry on. He did not present Himself as a high Church dignitary, high as an enthroned archbishop robed in scarlet and gold; nor was He comfortably placed as a canon in a snug cathedral stall; nor even a meek young curate casting longing eyes on Church preferment. The Church of the day would have none of Him. They flung Him from the synagogue. His ideas were unproven and unpalatable to His countrymen; He must build a new romantic world for Himself and His followers to live in outside the orthodox world of His day, if they wanted liberty to breathe, and so He began at the bottom of society and quietly built upwards. He was just a man walking amongst suffering humanity, and was one of the sufferers Himself. He came like dew descending on mown grass, noiseless, fragrant, healing; silently He ministered amongst the people, winning home to human hearts by sympathy and gentleness and love, and gradually the new kingdom of righteousness grew up in the midst of the weary old world. He gained dominion over men by their resistible beauty and power of Divine truth which He expounded, and made attractive by parable and picture and by His own blameless walk and conversation. His teachings were ex-

emplified in His life, and His life shines in undimmed beauty the exemplification of His teaching. He became a living gospel to them which all men could read, and His Divine personality was a centre of healing power which cured men's infirmities of body and mind. He had no money to pay for services rendered to Him, and He gave no hopes of worldly honour or possessions to His followers. He was homeless and at the mercy of friends for the shelter of a roof and the hospitality of His daily meals. He had intense sympathy with men, but He was no deluded optimist. He placed measured value on every man's pledge of fidelity to His cause, for He knew what was in man; with clear insight He saw into their dishonesty, selfishness, misery, but He knew they never had had a chance to do better, and He meant to give them a good chance all round. He frankly told people their sins, yet with all His straight speaking He won men and women to Himself. His manner was gracious, and He was indulgent to the frailties of our human nature with a sympathy that pardons all. The deep longings of His heart were for their happiness and uplifting, and the difficulty He encountered in leading them to follow the things that made for their peace was heartbreaking to His sensitive nature.

He had but few friends, and of the inner circle He gathered round Him all were not loyal; for He was betrayed into the hands of His enemies by one of the intimates of the band, and was forsaken by all in the hour of His supreme trial. He returned good for evil, blessing for cursing, and died in the act of praying for His enemies. No one could bring any serious accusation against Him, and he was declared innocent by the judge who condemned Him to death. Yet He was sacrificed as one whose life did not count; He was thrown as a sop to slake the blood-thirst of a howling Jewish mob. In the annals of the law-court His name is not mentioned, and there is no record of His trial and crucifixion to be found in history.

Looked at from the standpoint of men of His time, His life was a failure, and the delectable vision of a kingdom of righteousness on earth, the coming of which He pictured in glowing, fluent colours, reads like a dainty fairy-tale spun for children's amusement. Yet He himself saw through the darkness into the white light of the future, and beheld the crowning success of His mission. He saw the coming triumph of the Conquering Cross, which should subdue all things unto itself, and in place of the finest legend ever planted on human credulity by an artist in words He saw outlined through the dissolving mists of time, solid and well founded, the City Beautiful, with its shining streets, its many mansions and translucent atmosphere, peopled with white-robed citizens redeemed and ever blest; and the verdict of to-day is that the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth was the turning point in the world's destiny. No other personality has exerted such profound influence on the lives of men as Jesus of Nazareth, the despised and

rejected of His day.

The ministry of Christ on earth lasted about three years in all. Until He was thirty years of age He was content to rest in deep obscurity. Nazareth, with its quiet remote valley, was world enough for Him to move in, and when His hour was come He found Himself. He opened His mouth and taught the people. He passed from village to village, a travelling storm-centre, exposing respectable old sins, ripping up time-honoured religious hypocrisies, vexing the Pharisees, and confounding the vain traditions of the elders. He laid down new laws of life and conduct for men's observance, and unfolded the love of God to man in its plenitude of tenderness and pity; even to waifs and strays and outcasts of city slums who had never received a kind, hopeful word from the lips of their own religious teachers. In fact, it was God breaking in upon history, opening a new permanent way into heaven for lost men to return home by, and to cull the wayside flowers of joy and happiness whilst homeward bound.

Thus Jesus in three short years fearlessly and swiftly accomplished His world-wide mission, and died triumphantly in full achievement of His benign purpose.

Not half the story of those few full, crowded hours of His glorious life has been collected and cast into history. It is a brief narrative of a brief career; so little of His life comes in view. Just a few detached incidents and a few disjointed conversations jotted down from the mellowed memory of three or four old men years after the events occurred furnish us an incomplete memoir of His earthly ministry—that is all we have. There was no adoring pen of a ready writer like Boswell to fix on the spot His sayings and doings. We possess only stray fragments of the life-story gathered up from memory and hearsay, and on these gathered fragments we found all our spiritual faith and base our eternal hope of blessedness. The structure seems to have been casually and hastily put together, but its design is the work of the Supreme Architect, and the house was well built and the foundation securely placed, for it has sheltered many millions of people through many generations of time. The roof is still rainproof, and the walls stand firm in their pillared strength. *It is the living words of Christ that form the stronghold of the ages.* His words are seed-thoughts dropped into the hearts of men which bring forth fruit manifold. Again they drop into other hearts, and springing up yield fruit abundantly unto life everlasting; and so generation after generation men fall under His gracious spell, and turn to His words for guidance, for inspiration, for joy. You never reach the end of Christ's words. They are growing words. There is always something new springing out of them unexpectedly: new thoughts, new laws, new problems, new solutions, new enemies, new friends, new hopes, new consolations. The words of Christ are spending and being spent, but they are never exhausted. They pass into new meanings, into

new currency, but they never pass away. They are the hope of all the ages.

The early Christians lived in a state of spiritual elation; they daily, hourly, expected the Second Coming of Christ. It was the one article of their religious creed. The end of the world was to be the next important festival in the Church calendar, so they held in full view their heavenly home, which was already feathered for their reception. At the sound of the Archangel's trumpet the heavens would open, the dead rise from their graves, and they would be caught up in the air to meet the Lord, and float off triumphantly into mansions of eternal rest furnished for their home coming. They saw it all vividly as a drama soon to be enacted, in which they each would play their ordered parts. The present was a dream-life to them, a mirage quickly to melt away. This hope of immortality was the first bright ray of light the gospel of Jesus Christ shed upon mankind. Having minds heavily charged with celestial visions, the common round of daily duties became unreal to them. They had a short creed and no theology. They sat on the brink of eternity, and the radiance streaming from its shining heights bedazzled their minds with bewildering raptures.

After long and patient waiting the heavens did not open, no clarion voice trumpeted the dead from their graves or welcomed saints into paradise; the sordid, sin-stained earth remained their polluted dwelling-place. The illusion of the millennium faded away and disappointment frosted their early hopes, yet bravely they held on and died in the faith. The Saviour's promise did not fulfil on the comfortable lines they planned, but it would make good another way equally great. The Church learnt to take long views of the promises, and turned its thoughts to things terrestrial. The affairs of the present grew interesting to them; they commenced setting their earthly house in order, and when the Church settled down into the slow, steady stride characteristic of every long march it became clear that she was destined to rank amongst the permanent institutions of the world. She formed new rules of life for her children's guidance, and thus faith in Christ gradually lost the fragrant aroma of otherworldliness which first perfumed it, and in lapse of time the plan of salvation became more thought of than salvation itself. A vast ecclesiastical system was organized, having endless intricate ramifications, and God was appointed head of one department of it; and to-day heavy accretions of theology accumulate and fasten deadly tight on the old Church like barnacles crusting the bottom of a long floated ship, hindering its speed to port.

Verily the time has now come that the good ship of the Church be careened, and the foul accretions of mediæval theology stripped off and the solid copper bottom of truth flash clean and bright in the sunlight, and the truth as it is in Jesus recover its splendour and power as in days of the early Church. His teachings shall yet win men to righteousness, and the fruits of His lips bring peace and joy to those who believe on His name.

The words of Christ have a future before them in moulding the growing goodness of the world and in solving the hard problems of social reform which vex humanity. He is the wise Reconciliator who can adjust society and bring into harmony the classes of men now gnashing their teeth at one another on opposing fronts. Jesus Christ is the true Political Economist, but He taught far in advance of His times—truth always marches a bit ahead of us. At present in social science we are only just touching the hem of His garment, and healing virtue flows from it; presently we shall approach nearer to Him, and, feeling the full throb of His loving heart, we shall understand Him better, and His life-blood will pour into our veins and complete the healing of the nations.

XIII

THE LURE OF THE LIVING WORD

The English State Church suffers from excess of theology and paucity of gospel. Our narrow Church creeds, in which the gospel of Jesus Christ is kept under cork by ecclesiastical cellar-men, must be broken that the good wine of the kingdom may flow freely. The gospel of Jesus Christ in the unwholesome captivity of rigid creeds is a feeble, mean, contemptible gospel, quite unable to save mankind, which business it undertook to achieve when coming into the world. If the teaching of Jesus Christ is no larger or kindlier than these old crumbling creeds show, it deserves to be scrapped, for there is no room in them for Christ to have fair play. Christianity is not a formula, it is a passion; it is not theology, it is truth. These dismal dogmas have not enough spiritual nourishment in them to keep men's souls alive; men starve on such unleavened food.

What are these antiquated creeds of the Church which strangle religion? They are ancient dismantled strongholds where the fighting forefathers of the faith housed themselves tightly and fought their foes tenaciously. The modern fathers of the Church still inhabit these tottering towers of refuge, although their day of usefulness is spent. Loyal Churchmen still breathe lovingly the chilly, stifling atmosphere of these spiritual dungeons of traditional Christianity.

We are living in a new age since August, 1914, and a new spirit possesses the people. With this terrific war raging new standards of values in religion, as in politics, have come into operation, shattering old ideals evermore. To encourage

and strengthen them in this era of strain and conflict men need the larger, cleaner, diviner truth which fell from the lips of the living Christ. We want these truths to win through—the spoken words of Christ, with the free airs of heaven blowing across them, bringing healthiness of life, sanity of faith, and manifold charities, to all men who dwell on earth. The lure of the Living Word alone can hold men firm in this age of upheaval, when the old world has caved in and the plans of the new world are not yet manifest. There is finer, simpler, fuller spiritual teaching in the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, touching our present need than in all books of theology ever written and all Sunday sermons weekly preached. It is these half-forgotten things that matter on which new emphasis must be thrown.

Theology is the great imposture planted on mankind as a substitute for the teachings of Jesus Christ. When one leaves the words of Christ and strays amongst the words of men, it is like a traveller switching off the main line whereon his destination lies and losing himself on a side-track. It is disaster to side-track on the journey of life. Keep to the words of Christ and you keep on the main line. The gospel as revealed in the teachings of Jesus is entirely free from the sacerdotal imperative which nowadays imposes priest and ritual in the path of spiritual worship and blocks the fair-way to God. Priests and rituals and creeds are non-essentials; they are only wrappings: they are not religion, nor the best part of it. We must distinguish between living, breathing Christianity and the man-made ecclesiastical garments which clothe it fashionably, because the difference between them is vital and far-reaching. True religion, however, is seldom found stripped of all temporary wrappings, but its spiritual vigour survives in spite of Church-made millinery which encumbers it and impedes its healthy growth. Strip the religion of Jesus Christ of its grave-clothes and put the pure gospel in her mouth, and never tidings could be told to weary, heavy-laden men to-day which would be hailed as half so welcome. The one thing needful to make this world an earthly paradise, delightful to dwell in, is for men to live face to face with God, without a screen of ritual or image or priestcraft obstructing the view of our Heavenly Father; it is the light of God's countenance that cheers the heart of man, and strengthens him to live a good life in all sincerity of purpose.

Ecclesiastics have built up the Church into a colossal business trust which corners the Bread of Life and doles it to hungry mortals on terms of its own making. The Church is a wealthy corporation with immense property and privilege to safeguard and hold against all comers, and these temporal possessions engage its keenest thought and ceaseless activity. So it has important work to do other than saving the souls of men. To maintain its temporal authority in the world it has tampered with the teaching of Jesus Christ; by cunning craftiness of man the gospel has been twisted into theology, and the way of salvation shrouded behind a dense veil of ceremonial observances which the Church imposes on people and

declares necessary to the saving of their souls. Much conflicting religious literature is issued annually by free-lances of the Press to explain the downright simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus; and these conflicting opinions add other stumbling-blocks in the way, for they baffle the brains of the gentle reader, beating up a thick dust of doubt around him that his faith is smothered in a cloud of perplexity which darkens the daylight of truth.

The words of Jesus, when read and pondered over, prove religion to be a very simple matter. Yet this simplicity is its standing peril. So little human wisdom is needed to understand the words of Christ that we are apt to fear they do not mean what they say in plainest language—the language runs too easy for the majesty and importance and solemnity of the theme. We think there is an occult mystery lurking behind the honest homely phrases. Language so often bewilders simple-minded people that we are hard of belief when told we can find the way to heaven ourselves without the aid of a bishop's pastoral staff to point it out. The difficulty is to convince the plain man that he understands the words of Jesus when he reads them, and that he feels his spirit touch the Spirit of the Saviour of his soul without a priest between to make the contact. The Church as a commercial organization would fall quickly into bankruptcy if the gospel in its naked plainness was believed in whole-heartedly.

Very superior people tell us that the teachings of Jesus are only the beginning of God's revelation to man; they tell us that new revelations are constantly flowing in upon us through the sacred channel of the Church, and that the Church alone holds the key which deciphers these confidential messages despatched from mysterious sources for our edification. This is ecclesiastical bluff. The teachings of Jesus in the gospels suffice the spiritual needs of men through all time—time past, time present, and time to come. When God legislates once He legislates for aye, for truth is unchanging and cannot be improved on as the world grows older. No Divine after-thoughts will be added to the written word nor supplementary revelation supplied to guide men through the tangling maze of life. The Spirit of God is equal to all emergencies arising between now and the sundown of time. New-fallen light may illumine the written word in the forward quest of faith, for every age makes its own theology and coins new language to express old truths. The words of Christ are inexhaustible treasure locked in a deep mine, and in that mine lies many a lode of truth untapped by the diggers. The old gospel mine yields more and more treasure as the searchers strike deeper and deeper into its secret heart. The last nugget of truth has not yet been lifted from the treasure-house of God's Word.

Back to the words of Christ: this is the one hope of a truly good life—national or individual. If we forsake Christ and turn to the teachings of the Church for our spiritual well-being, we suffer for our folly in so doing. The

real meaning of anything is to be found at its beginning not in its latest developments. As religious systems develop and grow old they grow corrupt, and on the earthly journey pick up error with truth, and the two mixed together look equally sacrosanct to the uninitiated, simple soul, and even the very elect are oftentimes deceived. Water is purest at the spring-head; the farther it flows from the fountain, the more contaminated it becomes. Back to Jesus Christ and His teachings in the gospels. His words are the very life and light of men.

Men often mistake the nature of religion through wrong teaching received in early years or no teaching received at all, thus giving the well-rooted weeds of error a long start to grow rampant in the human soil. Some people think religion is an isolated activity, like collecting old china, a hobby you can pursue, drop, and pick up again at leisure. Other people imagine it is the conventional badge of good society, giving tone to a life of fashionable respectability, like a carnation slipped into your buttonhole which adds a finishing touch to your evening dress. But they are not over careful, these conventional people, to apply its tenets in the privacy of their homes; religion is never enthroned as a domestic virtue. Lord Melbourne, the early Victorian Prime Minister, was one day coming from church in the country in a mighty fume. Finding a friend on the road, he unloaded: "It's too bad. I have always been a supporter of the Church, and I have always upheld the clergy. But it is really too bad to have to listen to a sermon like that we had this morning. Why, the preacher actually insisted upon applying religion to a man's private life!"

Their interior life is neither better nor worse for hitching on religion as a supplementary virtue. Such good people would never miss an opportunity of attending a missionary meeting at Caxton Hall or neglect an early morning service at the parish church, but the maid-of-all-work in the kitchen is not benefited by the religious fervour which perfumes her ladyship with the odour of sanctity.

Religion is a state of mind giving purpose and direction to the whole round of a man's activities. Religion is not like a red holly-berry in a tumbler of clear water, a hard, insoluble object, pretty enough seen through the crystal medium, but working no change in the water. Religion resembles a drop of cochineal falling into the water; it colours with rose hue the full contents of the tumbler; it tinges the whole character and conduct of a man; it permeates his thoughts and feelings and actions, changing the colour of his life for good and for ever. Religion works a change—a radical change—that is the point. It is not a question of drapery; it does not merely hang up a decoration here and there to improve appearances, leaving the secret chambers of the heart unclean. It makes a new man in Christ Jesus even out of the coarsest raw material to be found on the human market.

The Church as established in our midst to-day cannot work a social regen-

eration in the land, for it gives forth so little of the teaching of Christ to the people. The gold of truth it circulates is mixed with the dross of error of its own minting. It may bear the image and superscription of Christ on it and pass the world's counter as genuine metal, but it is counterfeit coin of the kingdom. The Church does not grip the people. It is a fashionable institution of conventional high-grade orthodoxy, but it is a thing apart from the people. Its clergy socially are a multitude of pleasant, amiable, guileless folk spread over the tennis-lawns and garden-parties of England on a summer's afternoon, mingling good-humouredly with their neighbours, but ecclesiastically they belt themselves in a compact phalanx of self-centred, intolerant men with a purpose in life, or by preference they are self-constituted "priests." They hold the Church as a close borough, consume its revenues, swear by its creed, and maintain its privileges. They are strong partisans; the same interest guides them which governs the business man in upholding his trade interests—the sacred rights of property. To defend their inherited rights they will fight doggedly, and surrender only in the last trench.

Outside the charmed enclosure of the Church the clergy esteem their Christian neighbours ecclesiastical inferiors, not to be consorted with on equal footing, and they leave the Almighty to take charge of outsiders here and hereafter. As a class long years of clerical assumption has sapped the humanness out of their nature, and only a priest is left in their skin.

There are honourable exceptions to this general rule. Many individual clergymen are thoroughly alive with the spirit of Christ. They are men of broad sympathies and of intense devotion to their work, but it is surprising how tightly the Church as an institution grips those who minister at her altars; the Church is the idol of their hearts, the centre of their adoration. If the centre of their adoration could be transferred to Christ; if they could love Christ as devotedly as they love the Church of England, the result of their ministrations amongst the people would be gloriously successful; if instead of coddling the one respectable sheep that never strayed away they rounded up the ninety-and-nine lost ones and settled them in the home pastures the work would make their hearts ring with joy.

I have heard sermons by clergymen in which the Church and the Prayer Book were exalted as the chief Divine oracles before which we all must bow in blind submission as though Christ and the Bible existed not in any corner of the preacher's mind; and the result of such degenerate doctrine is that preachers add good Churchmen to their flock, but not good Christians to the fold of Christ. A good Churchman thus becomes a superior being to a common Christian, as though it were more important to be a Churchman than a Christian. "Churchman" really is only the trade name for a man who believes in the State Church. To be a Churchman is good enough for some people.

Compare the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth with the harsh, unsympathetic system represented by the Anglican creed which caricatures the Saviour in our midst. The cruel system which refuses to bury an unbaptized baby with its dead mother, or would refuse to allow a man or a woman to have a chance of happiness in marriage because, through no fault of their own, they have already suffered great unhappiness; that would refuse relatives permission to carve the word "Reverend" on the tombstone of a Wesleyan minister buried in a village churchyard because the dead man was not of the Church of England.

The Kikuyu Conference is typical of our bishops' lack of Christ-like charity and shortage of that kindly touch of nature that makes the whole world kin. The question lying before the bishops in conference was "the promotion of a brotherly spirit and the adoption of practical steps toward unity" in the mission-field; or, should the Church of England retain its old crusted conventions as an exclusive institution and cold shoulder all outsiders. The bishops consulted in Lambeth Palace over this aggravating question, and finally decided that their first duty was to protect the Church of England in all its ancient sanctities, to retain the proud boundary-walls isolating those within in strict spiritual seclusion, and to warn trespassers off their private ecclesiastical preserves. Their duty to the State Church was clear-cut and formulated—viz., to maintain its high-cast principles and to avoid the contagion of the sects. None of the beautiful roses of charity growing in their garden-close must run over the wall for the wayfarer to pluck. Their fraternal duty to native Christians won to Christ by missionary zeal remains obscure. However, no loose form of brotherly love or Christian fellowship can be permitted in the mission-field or elsewhere. State Church principles must be upheld. As a sweetmeat and as a goody-goody sample of what Jesus Christ meant by brotherly love, an occasional hospitality to other Christian communities may be practised without prejudice to Church principles; you may come and partake of Holy Communion with us in our Church, but we cannot partake of Holy Communion with you in yours. For you to come to us is a privilege, for us to go to you would be *infra dig*.

On these liberal lines the bishops expound the teachings of Jesus Christ and uphold Church principles, and if Christ's principles clash with Church principles, so much the worse for the principles of Jesus Christ. The Church is the orthodox institution, and must hold itself inviolate even against the heterodoxy of Jesus Christ. The Kikuyu Conference and its deliberations may be summed up briefly as a study in Church principles and how to maintain them.

Such harsh decisions bring contempt upon the Church, and widen the gulf which divides the rubric from the gospels and the clergyman from Christ. Jesus of Nazareth differs essentially from the Church on earth which to-day flies His banner and breaks His commandments. Christ declared for character and con-

duct as essentials in life; the Church favours creed and ceremony. Christ worked undogmatically, and the Church, overweighted with dogma, fails hopelessly in its Christly work.

Observe the generous, liberal, broad-minded traits which even in the scanty records of the gospels mark Jesus Christ as the kindest and most humane of men. Where there was a choice, He stood on the side of charity and common sense. He was no misanthrope; He was of social temperament. He knew well the joy of life, and He did not hesitate to participate in it. He drank wine Himself, and exerted miraculous power that others might drink it. In argument upon Sabbatarianism He took the more liberal view. He instantly and frankly forgave the woman taken in adultery. His heart went out in gentleness to children, to the poor, and to everybody who needed support and comfort. It is that golden thread of kindness running like flashes of sunlight through His ministry which wins the love and adherence of disciples to His name.

A few years ago an English ship foundered on the coast of Ushant. Many of the crew were drowned and the bodies washed ashore. The villagers of Ushant showed no little kindness to the shipwrecked strangers. The interment of the drowned sailors was a memorable scene. The deceased were all Protestants, the villagers were all Roman Catholics, yet the villagers performed the ceremony with all the ritual shown to those of their own faith. The curé officiating had qualms of conscience in admitting the bodies to the church and reading the Catholic service over them. An Englishman standing by remarked, "God has no creed." The curé waved his hand as if to dismiss the objections which perturbed his mind, and the service proceeded.

This is a refreshing lesson in humanity furnished by the simple-minded, good-natured fishermen of Ushant. The spirit of Jesus breathes in it victoriously over the narrowness of creed and the hardness of heart which separate men in much party bitterness.

XIV

THE LURE OF THE EUCHARIST

A beautiful spectacular ceremonial the Church has wrapped around the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, smothering it under the pomp of a religious service,

which works upon the nerves like a subtle, mastering spell. The senses of the worshipper become drugged with incense, dazed by the glitter of broided vestments, charmed with the strains of alluring music, spellbound with the deep droning voice intoning at the altar, and all the splendid equipments and sacred associations of the sanctuary, which tighten you up until a wrapt ecstasy of feeling intoxicates you in the midst of it all, and you are drenched in the luxury of strong, dreamy religious emotion.

For nineteen centuries the spectacle has been growing in significance, and it is not finished growing yet. Every age adds a decorative touch to embellish its colossal splendours. Finality in ecclesiastical evolution lies a long way off in the distance. If one of the twelve disciples who supped with our Blessed Lord on that historic night could slip out of paradise and for a few minutes witness a modern high celebration of the Holy Eucharist, he would marvel much at the imposing function, and marvel more at men's credulity in mistaking an ecclesiastical pageant for a simple act of devout obedience to Jesus Christ. The plain and homely meal which our Lord instituted to be a remembrance of Himself and His death on the Cross has flowered into an ornate and flamboyant religious function striking wonderment and awe in the hearts of mankind by the glitter of its barbaric and imposing splendours. The Church has worked up the Lord's Supper into a supernatural mystic rite run on old pagan lines; in fact, it amalgamates Christianity with ancient magic, and so the spirit of Christ escapes from the service, and only His traditional dead body reposes on the altar like the cold ashes of an extinct fire.

Recall the simple and unpretentious meal of which our Blessed Lord partook with His disciples on the eve of His betrayal and death. There in an upper room in the city of Jerusalem is the small assembly, consisting of the Master and His twelve disciples, and during the meal Jesus took a piece of bread, "and when He had given thanks, He brake it and said: 'Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me.' After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying: 'This cup is the New Testament in My blood; this do ye as often as ye drink in remembrance of Me; for as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.'"[*]

[*] 1 Cor. xi. 24-26.

On this plain foundation the amazing and pernicious rite of Transubstantiation has been reared—a veritable temple of divination, and cloistered within its shadowed recesses the priest casts his spell, dispensing religious consolations to credulous and confiding mortals tangled in the coils of the seductive creed.

Transubstantiation is a pagan heresy grafted on to Christian stock. In an-

cient times, when the pagan priest muttered an incantation over the idol of his god, the spirit of the god was supposed to enter the idol, and so when the Christian priest now utters a prayer over the bread and wine it is affirmed they become the real flesh and the real blood of Christ.

A brief glance back on the early history of the Church shows us the door through which this sacerdotal error slipped into the sacramental service, and how the Church drifted from the words of Jesus Christ and sought other and strange gods for counsel. For three centuries after the Crucifixion the disciples held closely together in little groups or churches in the towns where they abode. Many of them dwelt in Rome, down in the dark subterranean city of the catacombs, with its maze of narrow lanes, blind alleys, and cryptic sanctuaries, hidden under the gay, cruel city of sunlit streets and open air. Here they lived, striving faithfully and patiently to attain pure, blameless, holy lives before God in a pagan world, whose sins they renounced and whose hatred they courted by thrusting the new and unwelcome society of Christ into their hostile midst. Christians were mistaken for criminals—but there, Christ was crucified as one. Through all persecutions they held fast to the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Nothing daunted them, nothing disheartened them. The words of Christ refreshed them in all the weariness of spirit. In teeth of deadly opposition they grew in number until a questionable honour was conferred upon the Church which changed its fortunes and marred its simplicity. The Roman Emperor Constantine became a convert to the new religion, and now and henceforth the religion of Jesus Christ is honourable in the sight of all men. It is the fashionable craze of Rome. The Emperor's Court followed the Emperor's example and joined up. The Roman world followed the royal lead and professed conversion. This is the flowering-time of Christianity. The Christian sect, yesterday the outcasts and scum of the earth, are now received into polite society, dine in the best houses, and are welcomed everywhere. The bishops of the Church are dug out of their deep burrows in the stuffy underground where they practised the simple life; they put off their poverty of pocket and meekness of spirit, and are robed in gorgeous raiment and rank amongst the rulers of the earth. They are transfigured men in mind and in manners. The Bishop of Rome leaps into fame, wins for himself a palace and a throne in the city of the Cæsars, and a court of red-robed cardinals surge round him with royal observances and diplomatic intrigue. Our bishops in England become princes of the Church, have princely palaces, and princely revenues to maintain the dignity of their princely estate. These gilded grandees of the Church are considered to be spiritually the lineal descendants of the Peasant of Galilee who at nightfall had not where to lay His head. Flattery worked the Church's undoing, for in the hour of her worldly triumph she gave away all that the early Christian martyrs had died to win.

The mass of people who obsequiously played up to Constantine and joined the Church were not converted to the Christian faith; they did not believe in Christ with all their heart. To many of them Christ was only a new Deity added to the many gods they already worshipped. In heart they remained pagan, but behaved prudently and changed their coat at the Emperor's bidding. They did not forsake their old religion when they accepted the new creed; they amalgamated the two. They carried their pagan superstitions with them into the Christian Church, and, planted in new soil, there they took root and flourished vigorously in the garden of the Lord. The old gods became saints; the pagan shrines and images and festivals were whitewashed and christianized and given a place in the Church calendar; the magic by which their pagan priests trained the spirit of the gods to enter the idol at call, the same priestly magic transferred to the new religion brought the body of the Lord into the bread and the wine at the service of the Lord's Supper.

Such galloping progress did the heresy make amongst the mixed multitudes who mingled their devotions with the elect in the Church that before long the bread and wine were given to the dead. The Sacrament, it is supposed, was placed on the breast of dead persons, as a charm against evil spirits. This superstitious custom was rooted deeply in the religion of the day, for the Church was compelled to legislate on the subject. The custom was forbidden in Africa by the Council of Hippo, A.D. 393; the Council of Carthage, A.D. 397; and in Gaul at the Council of Auxerre, A.D. 578; yet it lingered tenaciously in the hearts of the people as a sacred custom to be observed regardless of hostility to it in high places. Again at the Council in Trullo, A.D. 691, it was forbidden. An incident in the life of St. Benedict, who died about the year 540, discloses much to us. A boy who had been disobedient died suddenly, and his corpse could not rest, in the grave, so St. Benedict ordered the body of the Lord (the Sacrament) to be placed on the breast of the boy, and the corpse rested immediately, and remained quietly buried.

The miraculous legend of the Lord's Supper obtains in the Church to-day with perfumed pomp and splendour of worship. The magic of the Real Presence bites deep into the core of the Church's creed. As the ages roll the legend develops new forms of expression. Its inferences are not always expressed, nor is its significance posted on the surface, but it is the deeply sunk tap-root of the green bay-tree of sacerdotalism which flourishes in the Church of Christ and binds the people round and round with disciplinary fetters of steel, captives to priestly power.

The consecrated bread and wine still are worshipped as being the body of the Lord. When the priest consecrates the bread and wine on the altar for the Communion Service, sometimes a part of it is reverently kept back and is called

the reserved sacrament; this reserved sacrament is conjured with. It is placed in a small box of ornate workmanship called a shrine or tabernacle, and is deposited on an altar in the church, which is called "God's resting-place," and is worshipped as the body of our Lord.

In preference, a secluded and quiet place in the church is chosen for the altar of the reserved sacrament. "Admirable arrangements have been made in some English churches. In one church there is a side-chapel somewhat out of sight from the main entrance of the church. In another there is a crypt chapel... In another there is a chapel reached by steps ascending from the church. By such arrangements, when the door of the chapel is kept unlocked and the fact of reservation is known, there is at once protection to the sacred presence of our Lord, and accessibility to those who will use it well." To these lonely side-altars in shadowy places of the sanctuary at any hour during the day stray worshippers come and kneel before the tabernacle and worship the body of Christ enclosed therein. "All that Christ can claim of human love and adoration is due to Him in His sacramental presence," says an Oxford advocate of the intruding heresy; "the worship which the Christian soul pays to Him when the sacrament is consecrated is paid also as it is reserved. It includes the utmost response of which the soul is capable."

In past times plain-speaking people called these worshippers of the sacrament idolaters. That word may reveal the thoughts of many hearts to-day. Dr. Darwell Stone, in his book "The Reserved Sacrament," advocates an ample toleration widely extended in the Church of England on behalf of these idolaters. Facing the accusation of idolatry cast by his opponents, he throws out a challenge. Speaking of those who make the charge of idolatry, "from their own point of view," he states, "they are perfectly right. If the consecrated elements are only bread and wine after consecration as before, whatever gifts or virtues may be attached to the profitable reception of them, those who imagine that they are worshipping our Lord are wholly wrong in seeking the object of their adoration in His presence in the Sacrament. But if it be true that by consecration the bread and wine become His Body and Blood, if our Lord Himself, eternal God, very Man, glorified, spiritual, risen, ascended, is present in the Sacrament, then in the adoration there is no idolatry, but rather the worship which is the bounden duty of a Christian."

Back to the New Testament, back to the words of Christ, and in reading them we find no evidence that Jesus at that farewell meal He partook with His disciples founded an elaborate and miraculous ordinance; we cannot read into the words of Christ any intention on His part to place in the hands of Churchmen a spiritual weapon to be used offensively and defensively in all their struggle and strategy for the Church's temporal aggrandizement, as it has been used to subdue

and flatten down the people under their spiritual charge. The miracle of the Real Presence is of man's device. It is an offspring born of priestcraft and pride. Christ has no part or lot in it. The impression the gospels compel in us is that Christ was fighting the sacerdotal error in religion throughout His whole ministry, and for the Church to claim Him as its founder is the greatest irony of Christianity.

But time works changes. As the story of the crucifixion of Christ receded with the lapse of lengthening years and became a distant tradition in Church history, the desire possessed men's minds for something tangible to nail their faith to; the desire was to bring Christ back again somehow into touch with living men and women. The blank of the long, silent ages grew intolerable. The chilling doubt of Thomas haunted men afresh; the longing to see and touch the wounded Christ gathered force. To gratify the religious devotion of the people, art did its best to portray in coloured pictures Jesus Christ the man who walked in Galilee and died in Jewry; and the Fathers of the Church responded promptly to the longing, and found to hand a ready-made mystery which answered the purpose and helped to stay the profound religious hunger of the day—a mystery which could be amplified to meet every expanding need of the people, and the people accepted with greedy faith the doctrine of the indwelling bodily presence of Jesus Christ in the bread and wine on the altar. These elements, they were assured, became changed into the real flesh and blood of Christ when consecrated by the priest, and the people acclaimed with reverent joy the wonderful transformation which brought Christ so near, and drew what religious consolation they could from the sacred illusion imposed upon them. The olden gods were returning in a new form.

The people did not know and did not want to know the truth about their creed. They had neither the leisure nor the brains to think for themselves. The cake is baked; it is eaten with relish. Hungry men at table do not analyze their food; they eat it and are thankful. The people did not know, but the people had feeling. The Church stirred their feelings to the uttermost, played upon the heart-strings of joy and sorrow, hope and fear, faith and love, until their tumultuous emotions were aroused and they believed blindly according to priestly orders. We would make neither more nor less importance of the Lord's Supper, only just what Christ made of it to His disciples and to plain people through all time. Let us try and possess the ancient feeling that possessed the disciples when they sat at table with the Master, and, stripped of ecclesiastical emblazonment, we touch the Supper in its primitive simplicity as instituted in the upper room with the shadow of death shrouding the Founder of the Feast. He commanded His disciples after His death to meet together thus and to break bread in remembrance of Him.

It is in memory of Christ, if the New Testament report of it is correct. Christ appointed the solemn rite to be an ever-living witness to His own love to man, and

we in response make it our pledge of undying love and devotion to Him. It is the Sacrament of the ages. It never varies in purpose; it never stales by observance. The Lord's Table is the prepared place on earth where the Church Catholic should assemble to commemorate the great Sacrifice of Golgotha, and to commune with one another in spiritual fellowship and brotherly unity. It is a commemorative act, and as such, uncorrupted and undefiled by human inventions, it should have come down to us, but the Church has tampered with the holy thing. Christ did not intend us to idolize the bread and wine. It is the legend of the Brazen Serpent repeating itself in modern version. Human folly boasts of little originality. It borrows its sins from its ancestors and charges them up to the children's children. The Brazen Serpent that Moses lifted on a pole in the wilderness for the healing of the people was a symbol of God's saving mercy to the nation. Alas! the people turned the brass image into an idol and in course of time worshipped it, and so did evil in the sight of the Lord. Christ did not intend us to idolize the Sacrament; Christ commanded us to eat and drink the bread and wine, not to worship it. The Sacrament is in memory of Christ's sacrifice: it is not a repetition of it.

To many Churchmen it is the simplicity of the service that savours of an offence. Human vanity dearly loves display, pomp, emotion, with which to salt its devotion to the Almighty and make it palatable to the Deity and to itself. Naaman the Syrian is not the only man who demands splendour of ceremony to colour a religious function in which he engages. His pampered soul feeds on fulsome flattery, and if he does not get it he is angry to the uttermost.

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