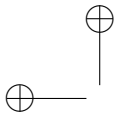
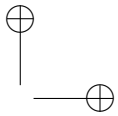

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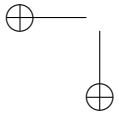
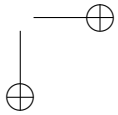

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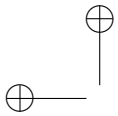
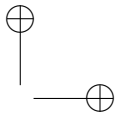

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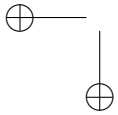
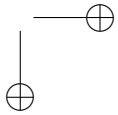

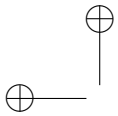
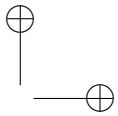

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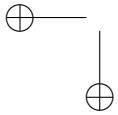
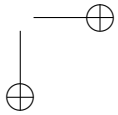

Contents

I

The Luxury of Conversation

Of indoor entertainments, the truest and most human is conversation. – Mark Pattison

In an age when everybody is writing Reminiscences, and when nothing is left untold, we hear a great deal about the wit and brilliancy of former days and former conversations. Elderly gentlemen, conscious of an ever increasing dulness in life, would fain have us believe that its more vivacious characteristics vanished with their youth, and can never be tempted to return. Mournful prophecies anent the gradual decay of social gifts assail us on every side. Mr. Justin McCarthy, recalling with a sigh the group of semi-distinguished men who were wont to grace George Eliot's Sunday afternoons, can "only hope that the art of talking is not destined to die out with the art of letter-writing." Mr. George W. E. Russell entertains similar misgivings. He found his ideal talker in Mr. Matthew Arnold, "a man of the world without being frivolous, and a man of letters without being pedantic;" and he considers this admirable combination as necessary as it is rare. American chroniclers point back to a little gleaming band of Northern lights, and assure us sadly that if we never heard these men in their prime, we must live and die uncheered by wit or wisdom. We are born in a barren day.

But conversation, the luxury of conversation, as De Quincey happily phrases it, does not depend upon one or two able talkers. It is not, and never has been, a question of stars, but of a good stock company. Neither can it decay like the art – or the habit – of letter-writing. The conditions are totally different. Letters form a by-path of literature, a charming, but occasional, retreat for people of cultivated leisure. Conversation in its happiest development is a link, equally exquisite and adequate, between mind and mind, a system by which men approach one another with sympathy and enjoyment, a field for the finest amenities of civilization, for the keenest and most intelligent display of social activity. It is also our solace, our inspiration, and our most rational pleasure. It is a duty we owe to one another; it is our common debt to humanity. "God has given us tongues," writes Heine, "wherewith we may say pleasant things to our neighbours." To refuse a service so light, so sweet, so fruitful, is to be unworthy of the inheritance of the ages.

It is claimed again, by critics disposed to be pessimistic, that our modern development of "specialism" is prejudicial to good conversation. A man devoted to one subject can seldom talk well upon any other. Unless his companions share his tastes and his knowledge, he must – a sad alternative – either lecture or be still. There are people endowed with such a laudable thirst for information that they relish lectures, – professional and gratuitous. They enjoy themselves most when they are being instructed. They are eager to form an audience. Such were the men and women who experienced constant disappointment because Mr. Browning, a specialist of high standing, declined to discuss his specialty. No sidelights upon

"Sordello" could be extracted from him. We realize how far the spirit of the lecture had intruded upon the spirit of conversation forty years ago, when Mr. Bagehot admitted that, with good modern talkers, "the effect seems to be produced by that which is stated, and not by the manner in which it is stated," – a reversal of ancient rules. We are aware of its still further encroachment when we see a little book by M. Charles Rozan, characteristically christened "Petites Ignorances de la Conversation," and find it full of odds and ends of information, of phrases, allusions, quotations, facts, – all the minute details which are presumably embodied in the talk of educated men. The world to-day devoutly believes that everything can be taught and learned. When we have been shown how a thing is done, we can of course do it. There are even little manuals composed with serious simplicity, the object of which is to enable us to meet specialists on their own grounds; to discuss art with artists, literature with authors, politics with politicians, science with scientists, – the last, surely, a dangerous experiment. "Conversation," I read in one of these enchanting primers, "cannot be entirely learned from books," – a generous admission in a day given over to the worship of print.

But in good truth, the contagious ardour, the urbane freedom of the spoken word lift it immeasurably from the regions of pen and ink. Those "shy revelations of affinity," which now and then open to the reader sweet vistas of familiarity and friendship, are frequent, alluring, persuasive, in well-ordered speech. It is not what we learn in conversation that enriches us. It is the elation that comes of swift contact with tingling currents of thought. It is the opening of our mental pores, and the

stimulus of marshaling our ideas in words, of setting them forth as gallantly and as graciously as we can. "A language long employed by a delicate and critical society," says Mr. Bagehot, "is a treasure of dexterous felicities;" and the recognition of these felicities, the grading of terms, the enlarging of a narrow and stupid vocabulary make the charm of civilized social contact. Discussion without asperity, sympathy without fusion, gayety unracked by too abundant jests, mental ease in approaching one another, – these are the things which give a pleasant smoothness to the rough edge of life.

So much has been said about good talkers, – brilliant soloists for the most part, – and so little about good talk! So much has been said about good listeners, and so little about the interchange of thought! "Silent people never spoil company," remarked Lord Chesterfield; but even this negative praise was probably due to the type of silence with which he was best acquainted, – a habit of sparing speech, not the muffled stillness of genuine and hopeless incapacity. A man who listens because he has nothing to say can hardly be a source of inspiration. The only listening that counts is that of the talker who alternately absorbs and expresses ideas. Sainte-Beuve says of Fontenelle that, while he had neither tears nor laughter, he smiled at wit, never interrupted, was never excited, nor ever in a hurry to speak. These are endearing traits. They embody much of the art of conversation. But they are as remote from unadorned silence as from unconsidered loquacity.

The same distinction may be drawn between the amenity which forbids bickering, and the flabbiness which has neither principles to uphold, nor arguments with which

to uphold them. Hazlitt's counsel, "You should prefer the opinion of the company to your own," is good in the main, but it can easily be pushed too far. Proffered by a man who bristled with opinions which he never wearied of defending, it is perhaps more interesting than persuasive. If everybody floated with the tide of talk, placidity would soon end in stagnation. It is the strong backward stroke which stirs he ripples, and gives animation and variety. "Unison is a quality altogether obnoxious in conversation," said Montaigne, who was at least as tolerant as Hazlitt was combative, but who dearly loved stout words from honest men. Dr. Johnson, we know, was of a similar way of thinking. He scorned polite tepidity; he hated chatter; he loved that unfeeling logic which drives mercilessly to its goal. No man knew better than he the unconvincing nature of argument. He had too often thrust his friends from the fortress of sound reason which they were not strong enough to hold. But his talk, for all its aggressiveness, and for all its tendency to negation, was real talk; not – as with Coleridge – a monologue, nor – as with Macaulay – a lecture. He did not infringe upon other people's conversational freeholds, and he was not, be it always remembered, anecdotal. The man who lived upon "potted stories" inspired him with righteous antipathy.

Perhaps the saddest proof of intellectual inertia, of our failure to meet one another with ease and understanding, is the tendency to replace conversation by story-telling. It is no uncommon thing to hear a man praised as a good talker, when he is really a good *raconteur*. People will speak complacently of a "brilliant dinner," at which strings of anecdotes, disconnected and illegitimate, have

usurped the field, to the total exclusion of ideas. After an entertainment of this order – like a feast of buns and barley sugar – we retire with mental indigestion for a fortnight. That it should be relished betrays the crudeness of social conditions. "Of all the bores," writes De Quincey with unwonted ill-temper, "whom man in his folly hesitates to hang, and Heaven in its mysterious wisdom suffers to propagate his species, the most insufferable is the teller of good stories." This is a hard saying. The story, like its second cousin the lie, has a sphere of usefulness. It is a help in moments of emergency, and it serves admirably to illustrate a text. But it is not, and never can be, a substitute for conversation. People equipped with reason, sentiment, and a vocabulary should have something to talk about, some common ground on which they can meet, and penetrate into one another's minds. The exquisite pleasure of interchanging ideas, of awakening to suggestions, of finding sympathy and companionship, is as remote from the languid amusement yielded by story-telling as a good play is remote from the bald diversion of the music hall.

Something to talk about appears to be the first consideration. The choice of a topic, or rather the possession of a topic which will bear analysis and support enthusiasm, is essential to the enjoyment of conversation. We cannot go far along a stony track. Diderot observed that whenever he was in the company of men and women who were reading Richardson's books, either privately or aloud, the talk was sure to be animated and interesting. Some secret springs of emotion were let loose by this great master of sentiment. Our ancestors allowed themselves a wider field of discussion than we are now in the habit

of conceding; but after all, as Stevenson reminds us, "it is not over the virtues of a curate-and-tea-party novel that people are abashed into high resolutions." We may not covet Socratic discourses at the dinner table, but neither can we long sustain what has been sadly and significantly called "the burden of conversation" on the lines adopted by William the Fourth, who, when he felt the absolute necessity of saying something, asked the Duke of Devonshire where he meant to be buried.

The most perfect and pitiful pictures of intercourse stripped bare of interest have been given us in Miss Austen's novels. Reading them, we grow sick at heart to think what depths of experience they reflect, what hours of ennui lie back of every page. The conversation of the ladies after Mrs. John Dashwood's dinner must stand forever as a perfect example of sustained stupidity, of that almost miraculous dulness which can be achieved only by "want of sense, want of elegance, want of spirits, and want of temper." Equal to it in its way is the brief description of Lady Middleton's first call upon the Dashwoods.

"Conversation was not lacking, for Sir John was very chatty, and Lady Middleton bad taken the wise precaution of bringing with her their eldest child, a fine little boy about six years old. By this means there was one subject always to be recurred to by the ladies in case of extremity, for they had to enquire his name and age, admire his beauty, and ask him questions which his mother answered for him, while he hung about her and held down his head, to the great surprise of her ladyship, who wondered at his being so shy before company, as he could make noise enough at home. On every formal

visit a child ought to be of the party, by way of provision for discourse. In the present case, it took up ten minutes to determine whether the boy were most like his father or mother, and in what particular he resembled either, for of course everybody differed, and everybody was astonished at the opinion of the others."

How real it is! How many of us have lived through similar half-hours, veiling with decent melancholy the impetuous protest of our souls!

Charles Greville is responsible for the rather unusual statement that a dinner at which all the guests are fools is apt to be as agreeable as a dinner at which all the guests are clever men. The fools, he says, are tolerably sure to be gay, and the clever men are perfectly sure to be heavy. How far the gayety of fools is an engaging trait it might be difficult to decide (there is a text which throws some doubt upon the subject), but Greville appears to have suffered a good deal from the ponderous society of the learned. We are struck in the first place by the very serious topics which made the table-talk of his day. Do people now discuss primogeniture in ancient Rome over their fish and game? It sounds almost as onerous as the Socratic discourses. Then again it was his special hardship to listen to the dissertations of Macaulay, and he resented this infliction with all the ardour of a vain and accomplished man. "Macaulay's astonishing knowledge is every moment exhibited," he writes in his Memoirs, "but he is not agreeable. He has none of the graces of conversation, none of the exquisite tact and refinement which are the result of a felicitous intuition, or of a long acquaintance with good society.... *His information is more than society requires.*"

The last line is a master-stroke of criticism. It embodies all that goes before and all that follows, – for Greville airs his grievance at length, – and it is admirably illustrated in his account of that famous evening at Holland House, when Lady Holland, in captious mood, rebelled against a course of instruction. Somebody having chanced to mention Sir Thomas Munro, the hostess rashly admitted that she had never heard of him, whereupon Macaulay "explained all he had said, done, written, or thought, and vindicated his claim to the title of a great man, till Lady Holland, getting bored, said she had had enough of Sir Thomas, and would hear no more. This might have dashed and silenced an ordinary talker; but to Macaulay it was no more than replacing a book upon the shelf, and he was just as ready as ever to open on any other topic." The Fathers of the Church were next discussed (it was not a frivolous company), and Macaulay at once called to mind a sermon of Saint Chrysostom's in praise of the Bishop of Antioch. "He proceeded to give us the substance of this sermon till Lady Holland got tired of the Fathers, and put her extinguisher on Chrysostom as she had done on Munro. Then with a sort of derision, and as if to have the pleasure of puzzling Macaulay, she turned to him and said: 'Pray what was the origin of a doll? When were dolls first mentioned in history?' Macaulay, however, was just as much up in dolls as in the Fathers, and instantly replied that the Roman children had their dolls, which they offered to Venus when they grew older. He quoted Persius, –

'Veneri donatae a virgine puppae,'

and I have not the least doubt that if he had been allowed to proceed, he would have told us who was the Chenevix of ancient Rome, and the name of the first baby that ever handled a doll."

This was indeed more information than society required. It is not surprising that Sydney Smith, perhaps the most charming talker of his day, was quickly silenced by such an avalanche of words, and sat mute and limp in the historian's company. Upon one occasion Greville went to visit the Marquis of Lansdowne at Bowood, and found Macaulay among the guests. "It was wonderful how quiet the house seemed after he had gone," comments the diarist grimly, "and it was not less agreeable."

That a rude invasion of the field is fatal to the enjoyment of intercourse we know from the sentiment of revolt expressed on every side. How little the people who heard Mme. de Staël's brilliant conversation appear to have relished the privilege! Mackintosh admitted that she was agreeable in a tête-à-tête, but too much for a general assembly. Heine hated her, as a hurricane in petticoats. "She hears but little, and never the truth, because she is always talking." Byron, who felt a genuine admiration for her cleverness, and was grateful for her steadfast friendship, confessed ruefully that she overwhelmed him with words, buried him beneath glittering snow and nonsense. The art of being amusing in a lovable way was not hers; yet this is essentially the art which lifted French conversation to its highest level, which made it famous three hundred years ago, and which has preserved it ever since as a rational and engaging occupation. A page of history lies revealed and elucidated in Saint-Simon's little sentence anent Mme. de Maintenon's fashion of

speech. "Her language was gentle, exact, well chosen, and naturally eloquent and brief."

No wonder she reigned long. Eloquent and brief! What a magnificent "blend"! How persuasive the "well-chosen" words, immaculately free from harsh emphasis and the feminine fault of iteration! Who would not be influenced by a woman who talked always well, and never too much; who, knowing the value of flattery, administered it with tact and moderation; and who shrank instinctively from the exaggerated terms which destroy balance and invite defeat? From the reign of Louis the Fourteenth to the Revolution, conversation was cultivated in France with intelligent assiduity. Its place in the fabric of civilization was clearly understood. No time was begrudged to its development, no labour was spared to its perfecting. Mr. Henry James is of the opinion that it flowered brilliantly in the middle of the eighteenth century. "This was surely," he says, "in France at least, the age of good society, the period when the right people made haste to be born in time. The sixty years that preceded the Revolution were the golden age of fireside talk, and of those amenities that are due to the presence of women in whom the social art is both instinctive and acquired. The women of that period were, above all, good company. The fact is attested in a thousand documents. Chenonceaux offered a perfect setting to free conversation; and infinite joyous discourse must have mingled with the liquid murmur of the Cher."

"Joyous discourse" is a beguiling phrase. It carries with it the echo of laughter long since silenced, – light laughter following the light words, so swiftly spoken, yet so surely placed. The time was coming fast when this

smooth graciousness of speech would inspire singular mistrust, and when Rousseau – ardently embracing nature – would write of the "fine and delicate irony called politeness, which gives so much ease and pliability to the intercourse of civilized man, enabling him to assume the appearance of every virtue without the reality of one." Later on, illusions being dispelled, the painful discovery was made that the absence of politeness does not necessarily imply the presence of virtue, and that taciturnity may be wholly disassociated with the truth. We owe to one another all the wit and good humour we can command; and nothing so clears our mental vistas as sympathetic and intelligent conversation. It can never languish in an age like ours, teeming with new interests widely shared, and with new wonders widely known. We must talk, because we have so much to talk about; and we ought to talk well, because our inspirations are of a noble order. Each new discovery made by science, each fresh emotion awakened by contemporaneous history, each successive pleasure yielded by literature or by art is a spur to rational speech. These things are our common heritage, and we share them in common, through the medium of the aptly spoken word.

II

The Gayety of Life

Grief is the sister of doubt and ill-temper, and, beyond all spirits, destroyeth man. – Shepherd of Hermas.

In the beginning of the last century an ingenious gentleman, Mr. James Beresford, Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, diverted himself and – let us hope – his friends, by drawing up and publishing an exhaustive list of the minor miseries of life. It is a formidable document, realistic in character, and ill calculated to promote the spirit of content. No one would ever imagine that so many disagreeable things could happen in the ordinary course of existence, until the possibilities of each and every one are plainly and pitilessly defined. Some of these possibilities have passed away in the hundred years that lie between King George's day and ours; but others remain for our better discipline and subjection. Political discussions at the dinner-table rank high among Mr. Beresford's grievances; also weak tea, – "an infusion of balm, sage, and rosemary," he calls it, – and "being expected to be interested in a baby."

A great deal of modern literature, and not a little modern conversation, closely resemble this unhappy gentleman's "black list." There is the same earnest desire to point out what we would rather not observe. Life is so full of miseries, minor and major; they press so close upon us at every step of the way, that it is hardly

worth while to call one another's attention to their presence. People who do this thing on a more imposing scale than Mr. Beresford are spoken of respectfully as "unfaltering disciples of truth," or as "incapable of childish self-delusion," or as "looking with clear eyes into life's bitter mysteries;" whereas in reality they are merely dwelling on the obvious, and the obvious is the one thing not worth consideration. We are all painfully aware of the seamy side, because we are scratched by the seams. What we want to contemplate is the beauty and the smoothness of that well-ordered plan which it is so difficult for us to discern. When Burke counselled a grave and anxious gentleman to "live pleasant," he was turning him aside from the ordinary aspects of existence.

There is a charming and gracious dogma of Roman Catholicism which would have us believe that all good deeds and holy prayers make up a spiritual treasury, a public fund, from which are drawn consolation for the church suffering, and strength for the church militant. A similar treasury (be it reverently spoken) holds for us all the stored-up laughter of the world, and from it comes human help in hours of black dejection. Whoever enriches this exchequer should be held a benefactor of his race. Whoever robs it – no matter what heroic motives he may advance in extenuation of the deed – has sinned heavily against his fellow men. For the gayety of life, like the beauty and the moral worth of life, is a saving grace, which to ignore is folly, and to destroy is crime. There is no more than we need, – there is barely enough to go round. If we waste our little share, if we extinguish our little light, the treasury is that much poorer, and our neighbour walks in gloom.

The Gayety of Life

The thinkers of the world should by rights be the guardians of the world's mirth; but thinking is a sorry business, and a period of critical reflection, following a period of vigorous and engrossing activity, is apt to breed the "plaintive pessimist," whose self-satisfaction is disproportionate to his worth. Literature, we are assured by its practitioners, "exists to please;" but it has some doubtful methods of imparting pleasure. If, indeed, we sit down to read books on degeneracy and kindred topics, we have no reason to complain of what we find in them. It is not through such gates as these that we seek an escape from mortality. But why should poets and essayists and novelists be so determinedly depressing? Why should "the earnest prophetic souls who tear the veil from our illusory national prosperity" – I quote from a recent review – be so warmly praised for their vandalism? Heaven knows they are always tearing the veil from something, until there is hardly a rag left for decency. Yet there are few nudities so objectionable as the naked truth. Granted that our habit of exaggerating the advantages of modern civilization and of modern culture does occasionally provoke and excuse plain speaking, there is no need of a too merciless exposure, a too insulting refutation of these agreeable fallacies. If we think ourselves well off, we *are* well off. If, dancing in chains, we believe ourselves free, we *are* free, and he is not our benefactor who weighs our shackles. Reformers have unswervingly and unpityingly decreased the world's content that they might better the world's condition. The first part of their task is quickly done. The second halts betimes. Count Tolstoi has, with the noblest intentions, made many a light step heavy, and many a gay heart sad.

As for poets and novelists, their sin is unprovoked and unpardonable. Story-telling is not a painful duty. It is an art which, in its best development, adds immeasurably to the conscious pleasure of life. It is an anodyne in hours of suffering, a rest in hours of weariness, and a stimulus in hours of health and joyous activity. It can be made a vehicle for imparting instruction, for destroying illusions, and for dampening high spirits; but these results, though well thought of in our day, are not essential to success. Want and disease are mighty factors in life; but they have never yet inspired a work of art. The late Professor Boyesen has indeed recorded his unqualified delight at the skill with which Russian novelists describe the most unpleasant maladies. He said enthusiastically that, after reading one of these masterpieces, he felt himself developing some of the very symptoms which had been so accurately portrayed; but to many readers this would be scant recommendation. It is not symptoms we seek in stories. The dullest of us have imagination enough to invent them for ourselves.

"Poverty," said old Robert Burton, "is a most odious calling," and it has not grown any more enjoyable in the past three hundred years. Nothing is less worth while than to idealize its discomforts, unless it be to sourly exaggerate them. There is no life so hard as to be without compensations, especially for those who take short views; and the view of poverty seldom goes beyond the needs of the hour and their fulfilment. But there has arisen of late years a school of writers – for the most part English, though we have our representatives – who paint realistically the squalor and wretchedness of penury, without admitting into their pictures one ray of

the sunshine that must sometimes gild the dreariest hovel or the meanest street. A notable example of this black art was Mr. George Gissing, whose novels are too powerful to be ignored, and too depressing to be forgotten. The London of the poor is not a cheerful place; it is perhaps the most cheerless place in Christendom; but this is the way it appeared in Mr. Gissing's eyes when he was compelled to take a suburban train:

"Over the pest-stricken region of East London, sweltering in sunlight which served only to reveal the intimacies of abomination; across miles of a city of the damned, such as thought never conceived before this age of ours; above streets swarming with a nameless populace, cruelly exposed by the unwonted light of heaven; stopping at stations which it crushes the heart to think should be the destination of any mortal, – the train made its way at length beyond the outmost limits of dread, and entered upon a land of level meadows, of hedges and trees, of crops and cattle."

Surely this is a trifle strained. The "nameless populace" would be not a little surprised to hear itself described with such dark eloquence. I remember once encountering in a third-class English railway carriage a butcher-boy – he confided to me his rank and profession – who waxed boastful over the size and wealth of London. "It's the biggest city in the world, that's wot it is; it's got five millions of people in it, that's wot it's got; and I'm a Londoner, that's wot I am," he said, glowing with pride that was not without merit in one of mean estate. The "city of the damned" appeared a city of the gods to this young son of poverty.

Such books sin against the gayety of life.

All the earth round,
If a man bear to have it so,
Things which might vex him shall be found;

and there is no form of sadness more wasteful than that which is bred of a too steadfast consideration of pain. It is not generosity of spirit which feeds this mood. The sorrowful acceptance of life's tragedies is of value only when it prompts us to guard more jealously, or to impart more freely, life's manifold benefactions. Mr. Pater has subtly defined the mental attitude which is often mistaken for sympathy, but which is a mere ineffectual yielding to depression over the sunless scenes of earth.

"He" – Carl of Rosenmold – "had fits of the gloom of other people, their dull passage through and exit from the world, the threadbare incidents of their lives, their dismal funerals, which, unless he drove them away immediately by strenuous exercise, settled into a gloom more properly his own. Yet, at such times, outward things would seem to concur unkindly in deepening the mental shadows about him."

This is precisely the temper which finds expression in much modern verse. Its perpetrators seem wrapped in endless contemplation of other people's gloom, until, having absorbed all they can hold, they relieve their oppressed souls by unloading it in song. Women are especially prone to mournful measures, and I am not without sympathy for that petulant English critic who declined to read their poetry on the plea that it was "all dirges." But men can be mourners, too, and –

In all the endless road you tread
Theres nothing but the night,

is too often the burden of their verse, the unsolicited assurance with which they cheer us on our way. We do not believe them, of course, except in moments of dejection; but these are just the moments in which we would like to hear something different. When our share of gayety is running pitifully low, and the sparks of joy are dying on life's hearth, we have no courage to laugh down the voices of those who, "wilfully living in sadness, speak but the truths thereof."

Hazlitt, who was none too happy, but who strove manfully for happiness, used to say that he felt a deeper obligation to Northcote than to any of his other friends who had done him far greater service, because Northcote's conversation was invariably gay and agreeable. "I never ate nor drank with him; but I have lived on his words with undiminished relish ever since I can remember; and when I leave him, I come out into the street with feelings lighter and more ethereal than I have at any other time." Here is a debt of friendship worth recording, and blither hearts than Hazlitt's have treasured similar benefactions. Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson gladly acknowledged his gratitude to people who set him smiling when they came his way, or who smiled themselves from sheer cheerfulness of heart. They never knew – not posing as philanthropists – how far they helped him on his road; but he knew, and has thanked them in words not easily forgotten:

"There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy. By being happy we sow anonymous benefits upon the world, which remain unknown even to ourselves, or, when they are disclosed, surprise nobody so much as the benefactor.... A happy man or woman is

a better thing to find than a five-pound note. He or she is a radiating focus of good-will; and their entrance into a room is as though another candle had been lighted."

There is little doubt that the somewhat indiscriminate admiration lavished upon Mr. Stevenson himself was due less to his literary than to his personal qualities. People loved him, not because he was an admirable writer, but because he was a cheerful consumptive. There has been far too much said about his ill health, and nothing is so painful to contemplate as the lack of reserve on the part of relatives and executors which thrusts every detail of a man's life before the public eye. It provokes maudlin sentiment on the one side, and ungracious asperity on the other. But, in Mr. Stevenson's case, silence is hard to keep. He was a sufferer who for many years increased the gayety of life.

Genius alone can do this on a large scale; but everybody can do it on a little one. Our safest guide is the realization of a hard truth, – that we are not privileged to share our troubles with other people. If we could make up our minds to spare our friends all details of ill health, of money losses, of domestic annoyances, of altercations, of committee work, of grievances, provocations, and anxieties, we should sin less against the world's good-humour. It may not be given us to add to the treasury of mirth; but there is considerable merit in not robbing it. I have read that "the most objectionable thing in the American manner is excessive cheerfulness," and I would like to believe that so pardonable a fault is the worst we have to show. It is not our mission to depress, and one recalls with some satisfaction Saint-Simon's remark anent Madame de Maintenon, whom he certainly did

not love. Courtiers less astute wondered at the enduring charm which this middle-aged woman, neither handsome nor witty, had for her royal husband. Saint-Simon held the clue. It was her "decorous gayety" which soothed Louis's tired heart. "She so governed her humours that, at all times and under all circumstances, she preserved her cheerfulness of demeanour."

There is little profit in asking ourselves or others whether life be a desirable possession. It is thrust upon us, without concurrence on our part. Unless we can abolish compulsory birth, our relish for the situation is not a controlling force. "Every child," we are told, "is sent to school a hundred years before he is born;" but he can neither profit by his schooling nor refuse his degree. Here we are in a world which holds much pain and many pleasures, oceans of tears and echoes of laughter. Our position is not without dignity, because we can endure; and not without enjoyment, because we can be merry. Gayety, to be sure, requires as much courage as endurance; but without courage the battle of life is lost. "To reckon dangers too curiously, to hearken too intently for the threat that runs through all the winning music of the world, to hold back the hand from the rose because of the thorn, and from life because of death, – this is to be afraid of Pan."

III

The Point of View

Look contentedly upon the scattered difference of things. – Sir Thomas Browne.

Fiction is the only field in which women started abreast with men, and have not lagged far behind. Their success, though in no wise brilliant, has been sufficiently assured to call forth a vast deal of explanation from male critics, who deem it necessary to offer reasons for what is not out of reason, to elucidate what can never be a mystery. Not very many years ago a contributor to the "Westminster Review" asserted seriously that "the greater affectionateness" of women enabled them to write stories, and that "the domestic experiences, which form the bulk of their knowledge, find an appropriate place in novels. The very nature of fiction calls for that predominance of sentiment which befits the feminine mind."

It is not easy, however, to account for Miss Austen and Miss Brontë, for George Eliot and George Sand, on the score of "affectionateness" and domesticity. The quality of their work has won for them and for their successors the privilege of being judged by men's standards, and of being forever exempt from that fatal word, "considering." All that is left of the half-gallant, half-condescending tone with which critics indulgently praised "Evelina" is a well defined and clearly expressed sentiment in favour of women's heroines, and a corresponding reluctance –

on the part of men at least – to tolerate their heroes. Mr. Henley voiced the convictions of his sex when he declared his readiness to accept, "with the humility of ignorance, and something of the learner's gratitude," all of George Eliot's women, "from Romola down to Mrs. Pullet" (up to Mrs. Pullet, one would rather say), and his lively mistrust of the "governesses in revolt," whom it has pleased her to call men. Heroes of the divided skirt, every one of them, was his verdict. Deronda, an incarnation of woman's rights. Tito, an improper female in breaches. Silas Marner, a good, perplexed old maid. Lydgate alone has "aught of the true male principle about him."

This is a matter worthy of regard, because the charm of a novel is based largely upon the attraction its hero has for women, and its heroine for men. Incident, dialogue, the development of minor characters, – these things have power to please; but the enduring triumph of a story depends upon the depth of our infatuation for somebody that figures in it, and here, as elsewhere, the instinct of sex reigns supreme. Why is it impossible for a man, who is not an artist or an art-critic, to acknowledge that the great portraits of the world are men's portraits? Because he has given his heart to Mona Lisa, or to Rembrandt's Saskia, or to some other beauty, dead and gone. Why do we find in the Roman Catholic Church that it is invariably a man who expounds the glory of Saint Theresa, and a woman who piously supplicates Saint Anthony? The same rule holds good in fiction. Clarissa Harlowe has been loved as ardently as Helen of Troy. Mr. Saintsbury gives charming expression to this truth in his preface to "Pride and Prejudice."

"In the novels of the last hundred years," he says, "there are vast numbers of young ladies with whom it might be a pleasure to fall in love; there are at least five with whom, as it seems to me, no man of taste and spirit can help doing so. Their names are, in chronological order, Elizabeth Bennet, Diana Vernon, Argemone Lavington, Beatrix Esmond, and Barbara Grant. I should have been most in love with Beatrix and Argemone; I should, I think, for mere occasional companionship, have preferred Diana and Barbara Grant. But to live with and to marry, I do not know that any one of the four can come into competition with Elizabeth."

This choice little literary seraglio is by no means the only one selected with infinite care by critics too large-minded for monogamy, while passions more exclusive burn with intenser flame. Of Beatrix Esmond it might be said that Thackeray was the only man who never succumbed to her charms. Women have been less wont to confess their infatuations, – perhaps for lack of opportunity, – but they have cherished in their hearts a long succession of fictitious heroes, most of them eminently unworthy of regard. We know how they puzzled and distressed poor Richardson by their preference for that unpardonable villain, Lovelace, whom honest men loathe. Even in these chill and seemly days they seek some semblance of brutality. The noble, self-abnegating hero has little chance with them. The perplexed hero has even less. It is a significant circumstance that, of all the characters upon whom Mrs. Humphry Ward has lavished her careful art, Helbeck of Bannisdale, who does n't know the meaning of perplexity, and who has no weak tolerance for other people's views, makes the sharpest

appeal to feminine taste. But masculine taste rejects him.

Rejects him, not more sharply, perhaps, than it is wont to reject any type of manhood put forward urgently by a woman. There was a time when Rochester was much in vogue, and girls young enough to cherish illusions wove them radiantly around that masterful lover who wooed in the fashion of the Conqueror. But men looked ever askance upon his volcanic energies and emotions. They failed to see any charm in his rudeness, and they resented his lack of *retenue*. Robust candour is a quality which civilization – working in the interests of both sexes – has wisely thought fit to discard. Even Mr. Birrell, who is disposed to leniency where Charlotte Brontë's art is concerned, admits that while Rochester is undeniably masculine, and not a governess in revolt, he is yet "man described by woman," studied from the outside by one who could only surmise. And of the fierce and adorable little professor, the "sallow tiger" who is the crowning achievement of "Villette," he has still more serious doubts. "Some good critics there are who stick to it that in his heart of hearts Paul Emanuel was a woman."

Does this mean that femininity, backed by genius, cannot grasp the impalpable something which is the soul and essence of masculinity? Because then it follows that masculinity, backed by genius, cannot grasp the impalpable something which is the soul and essence of femininity. Such a limitation has never yet been recognized and deplored. On the contrary, there are novelists, like Mr. Hardy, and Mr. George Meredith, and Mr. Henry James, who are considered to know a great deal more about

women than women know about themselves, and to be able to give the sex some valuable points for its own enlightenment. Just as Luini and Leonardo da Vinci are believed to have grasped the subtleties hidden deep in the female heart, and to have betrayed them upon their imperishable canvases in a lurking smile or a gleam from half-shut eyes, so Mr. Meredith and Mr. James are believed to have betrayed these feminine secrets in the ruthless pages of their novels. Mr. Boyesen, for example, did not hesitate to say that no woman could have drawn a character like Diana of the Crossways, and endowed her with "that nameless charm," because "the sentiment that feels and perceives it is wholly masculine." Why should not this rule work both ways, and a nameless charm be given to some complex and veracious hero, because the sentiment that feels and perceives it is wholly feminine? Mrs. Humphry Ward strove for just such a triumph in her portrait of Edward Manisty, but she strove in vain. Yet if the attraction of one sex for the other be mutual, why should it enlighten the man and confuse the woman? Or is this enlightenment less penetrating than it appears? Perhaps a rare perfection in recognizing and reproducing detail may be mistaken for a firm grasp upon the whole.

Certain it is that if men have looked with skepticism at the types of manhood presented with so much ardour by female novelists, – if they have voted Rochester a brute, and Mr. Knightley a prig, and Robert Elsmere a bore, and Deronda "an intolerable kind of Grandison," – women in their turn have evinced resentment, or at least impatience, at the attitude of heroines so sweetly glorified by men. Lady Castlewood is a notable example. How kindly Thackeray – who is not always kind – treats this

"tender matron," this "fair mistress" of the admirable Esmond! What pleasant adjectives, "gentlest," "truest," "loveliest," he has ever ready at her service! How frankly he forgives faults more endearing than virtues to the masculine mind! "It takes a man," we are told, "to forgive Lady Castlewood." She is the finest and most reverent incarnation of what men conceive to be purely feminine traits. In a world that belongs to its masters, she is an exquisite appurtenance, a possession justly prized. In a world shared – albeit somewhat unevenly – by men and women, she seems less good and gracious. "I always said I was alone," cries Beatrix sternly. "You were jealous of me from the time I sat on my father's knee." And the child's eyes saw the truth.

It has been claimed, and perhaps with justice, that the irritation provoked by Thackeray's virtuous heroines is born of wounded vanity. Mr. Lang observes that women easily pardon Becky Sharp and Blanche Amory, but never Amelia Sedley nor Laura Pendennis. For the matter of that, men easily pardon Mr. Collins and Mr. Elton. They do more than pardon, they delight in these incomparable clerics, and they adore Miss Austen for having created them. Mr. Saintsbury vows that Mr. Collins is worthy of Fielding or Swift. But their sentiments towards the excellent Edmund Bertram, who is all that a parson should be, are not wholly unlike the sentiments of women towards Amelia Sedley, who is all that a wife and a mother should be; nor are they ready to admit that Mr. Darcy and Mr. Knightley are worthy of Elizabeth and Emma. Lord Brabourne has recorded a distinct prejudice against Mr. Knightley, on the ground that he interferes too much; yet it is plain that

Miss Austen considered this interference as a masculine prerogative, exercised with judgment and discretion. He is what women call "a thorough man," just as Amelia is what men call "a thorough woman." Mr. Lang bravely confesses his affection for her on this very score: "She is such a thorough woman." It evidently does not occur to him to doubt Thackeray's knowledge, or his own knowledge, of the sex.

Around Fielding's heroines the battle has raged for years. These kind-hearted, sweet-tempered creatures have been very charming in men's eyes. Scott loved Sophia Western as if she had been his own daughter, – he would have treated her differently, – and took especial pleasure in her music, in the way she soothed her father to sleep after dinner with "Saint George, he is for England." Sir Walter and Squire Western had a stirring taste in songs. Dr. Johnson gave his allegiance without reserve to Fielding's Amelia. He read the inordinately long novel which bears her name at a single sitting, and he always honoured her as the best and loveliest of her sex, – this, too, at a time when Clarissa held the hearts of Christendom in her keeping. Amelia Booth, like Amelia Sedley, is a "thorough woman" that is, she embodies all the characteristics which the straightforward vice of the eighteenth century conceived to be virtues in her sex, and which provoke the envious admiration of our own less candid age. "Fair, and kind, and good," so runs the verdict. "What more can be desired?" And the impatient retort of the feminine reader, "No more, but possibly a little less," offends the critic's ear. "Where can you find among the genteel writers of this age," asks Mr. Lang hotly, "a figure more beautiful, tender, devoted, and, in

all good ways, womanly, than Sophia Western?" "The adorable Sophia," Mr. Austin Dobson calls her, – "pure and womanly, in spite of her unfavourable surroundings." Womanliness is the one trait about which they are all cock-sure. It is the question at issue, and cannot be lightly begged. But Sophia's strongest plea is the love Sir Walter gave her.

For Scott, though most of his young heroines are drawn in a perfunctory and indifferent fashion – mere incentives to enterprise or rewards of valour – knew something of the quicksands beyond. He made little boast of this knowledge, frankly preferring the ways of men, about whom there was plenty to be told, and whose motives never needed a too assiduous analysis. Mr. Ruskin, it is true, pronounced all the women of the Waverley Novels to be finer than the men; but he was arguing on purely ethical grounds. He liked the women better because they *were* better, not because their goodness was truer to life. He was incapable of judging any work, literary or artistic, by purely critical standards. He had praise for Rose Bradwardine, and Catherine Seyton, and Alice Lee, because they are such well-behaved young ladies; he excluded from his list of heroines Lucy Ashton, who stands forever as a proof of her author's power to probe a woman's soul. Scott did not care to do this thing. The experiment was too painful for his hands. But critics who talk about the subtleties of modern novelists, as compared with Sir Walter's "frank simplicity," – patronizing phrase! – have forgotten The Bride of Lammermoor." There is nothing more artistic within the whole range of fiction than our introduction to Lucy Ashton, when the doomed girl – as yet unseen – is heard singing those

curious and haunting lines which reveal to us at once the struggle that awaits her, and her helplessness to meet and conquer fate.

There are fashions in novel-writing, as in all things else, and a determined effort to be analytic is imposing enough to mislead. We usually detect this effort when men are writing of women, and when women are writing of men. The former seek to be subtle; the latter seek to be strong. Both are determined to reveal something which is not always a recognizable revelation. In the earlier "novels of character" there is none of this delicate surgery. Fielding took his material as he found it, and so did Miss Austen. She painted her portraits with absolute truthfulness, but she never struggled for insight; above all she never struggled for insight into masculinity. She knew her men as well as any author needs to know them; but her moments of illumination, of absolute intimacy, were for women. It is in such a moment that Emma Woodhouse realizes, "with the speed of an arrow," that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself.

There is nothing "subtle" in this; nothing that at all resembles Mr. Hardy's careful explorations into the intricacies of a character like Eustacia Vye, in "The Return of the Native." There is nothing of Mr. James's artfulness, nothing of Mr. Meredith's daring. These two eminent novelists are past masters of their craft. They present their heroines as interesting puzzles to which they alone hold the key. They keep us in a state of suspense from chapter to chapter, and they too often baffle our curiosity in the end. The treatment of Miriam Roth, in "The Tragic Muse," is a triumph of ingenuity. "What do you think of her?" "What can you make out of

her?" "What is she now, and what is she going to be?" are the unasked, and certainly unanswerable, questions suggested by every phase of this young woman's development. The bewildered reader, unable to formulate a theory, unable to make even a feeble conjecture, is much impressed by the problem laid before him, and by the acuteness of the author who deciphers it. If to evolve a sphinx and to answer her riddle is to interpret femininity, then there are modern novelists who have entered upon their kingdom. But one remembers Rochefoucauld's wise words: "The greatest mistake of penetration is, not to have fallen short, but to have gone too far."

IV

Marriage in Fiction

They fought bitter and regular, like man and wife.

Since the days of Richardson and Fielding, English novelists have devoted themselves with tireless energy to the pleasant task of match-making. They have held this duty to be of such paramount importance that much of their work has practically no other *raison d'être*. They write their stories – so far as we can see – solely and entirely that they may bring two wavering young people to the altar; and they leave us stranded at the church doors in lamentable ignorance of all that is to follow. Thackeray once asked Alexandre Dumas why he did not take up the real history of other people's heroes and heroines, and tell the world what their married lives were like.

It would have been a perilous enterprise, for, notwithstanding two centuries of practice, novelists are astonishingly bad match-makers. We know what happened when Thackeray himself undertook to continue the tale of Ivanhoe and Rowena, whom Scott abandoned to their fate, with merely a gentle hint of some mental deviations on the bridegroom's part. Sir Walter, indeed, always shook hands with his young couples on their wedding-day, and left them to pull through as best they could. Their courtships and their marriages interested him less than other things he wanted to write about, – sieges and

tournaments, criminal trials, and sour Scottish saints. He had lived his own life bravely and happily without his heart's desire; he believed that it was the fate of most men to do the same; and he clung stoutly to Dryden's axiom:

Secrets of marriage still are sacred held,
Their sweet and bitter from the world concealed.

In real life this admirable reticence is a thing of the past; but the novelist, for the most part, holds his peace, leaving his readers a prey to melancholy doubts and misgivings.

The English-speaking novelist only. In French fiction, as Mr. Lang points out, "love comes after marriage punctually enough, but it is always love for another." The inevitableness of the issue startles and dismays an English reader, accustomed to yawn gently over the innocent prenuptial dallyings of Saxon man and maid. The French story-writer cannot and does not ignore his social code which urbanely limits courtship. When he describes a girl's dawning sentiment, he does so often with exquisite grace and delicacy; but he reserves his portrayal of the master passion until maturity gives it strength, and circumstances render it unlawful. His conception of his art imposes no scruple which can impede analysis. If an English novelist ventures to treat of illicit love, the impression he gives is of a blind, almost mechanical force, operating against rather than in unison with natural laws. Those normal but most repellent aspects of the case, which the Frenchman treats openly and exhaustively, the Englishman ignores or rejects. His

theory of civilization is built up largely – and wisely – on suppression.

But why should the sentiment or passion of love be the chosen theme of story-writers, to the practical exclusion of other interests? Why should it be the central point around which their tales revolve? When we look about us in the world we know, we cannot think that love is taking up much time and attention in people's lives. It dominates gloriously for a brief period, – or for brief periods, – and then makes way for other engrossing influences. Its might and authority are recognized; but the recognition does not imply constant concern. The atmosphere of life is not surcharged with emotion, as is the atmosphere of fiction. Society is not composed of young men and women falling madly but virtuously in love with one another, nor of married men and women doing the same thing on less legitimate lines.

To these rational arguments, which have been urged by restless critics before now, M. Paul Bourget makes answer that novelists deal with love because, under its white heat, all characteristics become more vividly alive, and are brought more actively and more luminously into play. Man is never so self-revealing as when consumed by passion. We see into his heart, only when it is lit by the flame of desire. Moreover, love being natural, and in a manner inevitable, there is not in treating of it that suggestion of artifice which chills our faith in most of the incidents of fiction.

But is the man whom we see revealed by the light of love the real man? Can we, after this transient illumination, say safely to ourselves, "We know him well"? Is it his true and human self, *son naturel*, to use an admirable

old French phrase, which is both quickened and betrayed by passion? Putting cynicism aside, rejecting Lord Bacon's dictum, "Love is a nuisance, and an impediment to important action," we are still doubtful as to the value of traits studied under these powerful but perishable conditions. It is not what a man does when he is in love, but what he does when he is out of love (Philip drunk to Philip sober) which counts for characterization. That pleasant old romancer, Maistro Rusticiano di Pisa, tells us that a courtier once asked Charlemagne whether he held King Meliadus or his son Tristan to be the better man. To this question the Emperor made wise reply: "King Meliadus was the better man, and I will tell you why. As far as I can see, everything that Tristan did was done for love, and his great feats would never have been done, save under the constraint of love, which was his spur and goad. Now this same thing can never be said of King Meliadus. For what deeds he did, he did them, not by dint of love, but by dint of his strong right arm. Purely out of his own goodness he did good, and not by constraint of love."

It is this element of coercion which gives us pause. Not out of his own goodness, nor out of his own badness, does the lover act; but goaded onward by a force too impetuous for resistance. When this force is spent, then we can test the might of his "strong right arm." Who that has read it can forget the matchless paragraph of adjectives in which the Ettrick Shepherd contrasts the glowing deceits of courtship with the sober sincerities of married life? "Love," he sighs, "is a saft, sweet, bright, balmy, triumphant, and glorious lie, in place of which nature offers us in mockery during a' the rest o' our lives

the puir, paltry, pitiful, faded, fushionless, cauldrified, and chittering substitute, truth."

Small wonder that novelists content themselves with making matches, and refrain from examining too closely the result of their handiwork. They would have more conscience about it, if it were not so easy for them to withdraw. They are almost as irresponsible as poets, who delight in yoking unequal mates, as proof of the power of love. Poetry weds King Cophetua to the beggar maid, and smilingly retires from any further contemplation of the catastrophe. Shakespeare gives Celia – Celia, with her sweet brown beauty, her true heart, her nimble wit, her grace of exquisite companionship – to that unnatural sinner, Oliver; and the only excuse he offers is that Oliver says he is sorry for his sins. So I suppose Helen of Troy said she regretted her indiscretion, and this facile repentance reinstated her in happy domesticity. But the novelist is not at play in the Forest of Arden. He is presumably grappling with the dismal realities of earth. Nothing could be less like a fairy playground than the village of Thrums ("If the Auld-Licht parishioners ever get to heaven," said Dr. Chalmers, "they will live on the north side of it"); yet it is in Thrums that Mr. Barrie marries Babbie to the Little Minister, – marries her with a smile and a blessing, as though he had solved, rather than complicated, the mysterious problem of life.

The occasional and deliberate effort of the novelist to arrange an unhappy union in order to emphasize contrasts of character is an advance toward realism; but the temporary nature of such tragedies (which is well understood) robs the situation of its power. In the typical instance of Dorothea Brooke and Mr. Casaubon, George

Eliot deemed it necessary to offer careful explanation of her conduct, – or of Dorothea's, – and she rather ungenerously threw the blame upon Middlemarch society, which was guiltless before high Heaven, and upon the then prevalent "modes of education, which made a woman's knowledge another name for motley ignorance." In reality, Dorothea was alone responsible; and it is hard not to sympathize with Mr. Casaubon, who was digging contentedly enough in his little dry mythological dust-heaps when she dazzled him into matrimony. It is hard for the unregenerate heart not to sympathize occasionally with Rosamond Viney and with Tito Melema, whom George Eliot married to Lydgate and to Romola, in order that she might with more efficacy heap shame and scorn upon their heads. The moral in all these cases is pointed as unwaveringly as the compass needle points to the North Star. This is what happens when noble and ignoble natures are linked together. This is what happens when the sons of God wed with the daughters of men. We are not to suppose that it was poor Mr. Casaubon's failure to write his "Key to all Mythologies," nor even his ignorance of German, which alienated his wife's affection; but rather his selfish determination to sacrifice her youth and strength on the altar of his vanity, – a vanity to which her early homage, be it remembered, had given fresh impetus and life.

The pointing of morals is not, however, the particular function of married life. The problem it presents is a purely natural one, and its ethical value is not so easily ascertained. For the most part the sons of men wed with the daughters of men. They do not offer the contrast of processional virtues and of deep debasement; but the

far wider contrast of manhood and of womanhood, of human creatures whose minds and hearts and tastes and instincts are radically unlike; who differ in all essentials from the very foundations of their being. "Our idea of honour is not their idea of honour," says Mr. Lang, speaking for men, and of women; "our notions of justice and of humour are not their notions of justice and of humour; nor can we at all discover a common calculus of the relative importance of things."

This is precisely why we wish that novelists would not neglect their opportunities, and shirk their responsibilities, by escaping at the church door. What did really happen when Babbie married the little Minister, and added to the ordinary difficulties of wedlock the extraordinary complications of birth and training, habits and character, irreconcilably at variance with the traditions of the Auld-Licht rectory? We know how the mother of John Wesley, – and incidentally of eighteen other children, – a dour, stern, pious parson's wife, refused to say amen to her husband's prayer for King William, and dwelt apart from her reverend spouse and master for twelve long months, rather than relinquish a sentiment of loyalty for the rightful sovereign of the land. Such incidents stand in our way when we are told musically that –

Love will still be lord of all.

Mrs. Wesley loved her husband, and she did not love the banished and papistical James; yet it was only King William's death (a happy and unforeseen solution of the difficulty) which brought her back to submission and conjugal joys.

For one of the most ill-assorted marriages in fiction Miss Austen must be held to blame. It was this lady's firm conviction (founded on Heaven knows what careful and continued observation) that clever men are wont for the most part to marry foolish or stupid women. We see in nearly all her books the net results of such seemingly inexplicable alliances. In what moment of madness did Mr. Bennet ask Mrs. Bennet to be his wife? Nothing can explain such an enigma; but Miss Austen's philosophy, and her knowledge of that commonplace middle-class English life, which the eighteenth century had stripped bare of all superfluous emotions, enabled her to prove – to her own satisfaction at least – that Mr. Bennet was tolerably content with the situation. It is not too much to say that he enjoys his wife's absurdities. Only in his few earnest words to Elizabeth, when Darcy has asked for her hand: "My child, let me not have the grief of seeing *you* unable to respect your partner in life," do we catch a glimpse of the Valley of Humiliation which he has trodden for twenty-four years. A still more emphatic illustration of Miss Austen's point of view is afforded us in "Sense and Sensibility," when Eleanor Dashwood decides that Mrs. Palmer's surpassing foolishness cannot sufficiently account for Mr. Palmer's rudeness and discontent. "His temper might perhaps be a little soured by finding, like many others of his sex, that, through some unaccountable bias in favour of beauty, he was the husband of a very silly woman; but she knew that this kind of blunder was too common for any sensible man to be lastingly hurt by it."

Fortified by such philosophy, convinced that the natural order of things, though mysterious and unpleasant,

does not entail unhappiness, Miss Austen deliberately marries Henry Tilney to Catherine Morland; marries them after an engagement long enough to have opened the bridegroom's eyes, were it not for the seventy merciful miles which lie between Northanger Abbey and the rectory of Fullerton. With an acute and delicate cynicism, so gently spoken that we hardly feel its sting, she proves to us, in a succession of conversations, that "a good-looking girl with an affectionate heart and a very ignorant mind cannot fail of attracting a clever young man, unless circumstances are particularly untoward." When Catherine delivers her priceless views upon the unprofitable labour of historians, we know that Mr. Tilney's fate is sealed.

"You are fond of history! – and so are Mr. Allen and my father; and I have two brothers who do not dislike it. So many instances within my small circle of friends is remarkable. At this rate, I shall not pity the writers of history any longer. If people like to read their books, it is all very well; but to beat so much trouble in filling great volumes, which, as I used to think, nobody would willingly ever look into, to be labouring only for the torment of little boys and girls, always struck me as a hard fate. And though I know it is all very right and necessary, I have often wondered at the person's courage that could sit down on purpose to do it."

To be told that history is made admirable because you read it, is flattering indeed. Mr. Tilney is satisfied that Catherine has "a great deal of natural taste," – an impression which her artless admiration for his talents deepens into agreeable certainty. When he asks her hand in marriage, Miss Austen reminds us with dispassionate

candour that his attachment originated in gratitude. "A persuasion of her partiality for him had been the only cause of his giving her a serious thought." There is a final jest about beginning "perfect happiness" at the respective ages of twenty-six and eighteen, and the curtain is rung down upon a lifetime of irrational ennui.

The world of the novelist is full of such strange mishaps, and our sense of inquietude corresponds with our conviction of their reality. Mrs. Ward probably does not expect us to believe that Jacob Delafield and Julie Le Breton lived happily and harmoniously together. There is something as radically inharmonious in their marriage as in the union of conflicting elements. It is not a question of taking chances of happiness, as Sophia Western takes them with Tom Jones (very good chances, to my way of thinking); it is a question of unalterable laws by which the gods limit our human joy. But there is no sharp sense of disappointment awakened in our hearts when we read "Lady Rose's Daughter," as when more powerful currents of emotion turn awry. That Henry Esmond should have married Lady Castlewood, or rather, that he should not have married Beatrix, I count one of the permanent sorrows of life.

In an exceedingly clever and ruthlessly disagreeable novel by Mr. Bernard Shaw, "Cashel Byron's Profession," there is a brief, clear exposition of that precise phase of life which novelists, as a rule, decline to elucidate. Cashel Byron is a prizefighter, a champion light-weight, well-born (though he does not know it) and of cleanly life; but nevertheless a prizefighter, with the instincts, habits, and vocabulary of his class. A young woman, rich, refined, bookish, brought up in a rarefied intellectual atmosphere

which has starved her healthy sentiment to danger point, falls helplessly in love with his beauty and his strength, and marries him, in mute desperate defiance of social laws. The story closes at this point, but the author adds a brief commentary, designed to explain the limited possibilities of happiness that exist for the ex-pugilist and his wife.

"Cashel's admiration for Lydia survived the ardour of his first love for her, and she employed all her forethought not to disappoint his reliance on her judgment. She led a busy life, and wrote some learned monographs, as well as a work in which she denounced education as practised in the universities and public schools. Her children inherited her acuteness and refinement, with their father's robustness and aversion to study. They were precocious and impudent, had no respect for Cashel, and showed any they had for their mother principally by running to her when they were in difficulties.... The care of this troublesome family had one advantage for her. It left her little time to think about herself, or about the fact that, when the illusion of her love passed away, Cashel fell in her estimation. But the children were a success, and she soon came to regard him as one of them. When she had leisure to consider the matter at all, which seldom occurred, it seemed to her that, on the whole, she had chosen wisely."

Here are conditions which, if presented at length and with sufficient skill, might hold us spellbound. Here is an opportunity to force conviction, were the novelist disposed to grapple with his real work. As it is, Mr. Shaw contents himself with adding one more to the marital failures of fiction. Dr. Johnson said that most marriages

would turn out as well if the Lord Chancellor made them. The Lord Chancellor would assuredly make them better than that blundering expert, the novelist.

V

Our Belief in Books

> *What pleasantness of teaching there is in books, – how easy, how secret! How safely we lay bare the poverty of human ignorance to books, without feeling any shame! They are masters who instruct us without rod or ferule, without angry words, without clothes or money. If you come to them, they are not asleep; if you ask and inquire of them, they do not withdraw themselves; they do not chide if you make mistakes; they do not laugh at you if you are ignorant. O books, who alone are liberal and free, who give to all who ask of you, and enfranchise all who serve you faithfully.*
> – Richard de Bury, *Bishop of Durham,* a.d. *1459.*

Enough has been written in praise of books to fill a library. It is not always so eloquently worded as is the Bishop of Durham's benediction; but the same general truths – or fallacies – are repeated with more or less pride and persuasiveness. At the same time, a lesser library might be compiled of the warnings uttered by the anxious ones who hold that the power of books is more potent than benign, and that if one half of the world's readers are being led gloriously to high and noble truths, the other half is being vitiated by an influence which makes for paltriness and degradation. Under all circumstances, we are asked to believe that we are dominated by the printed page. It is this conviction which induces so much of austerity – not to say of censoriousness – in our counsellors, whose upbraidings are but the echoes of

those sterner protests with which church and state were wont in earlier days to direct the reading courses of the public. That books have always been deemed formidable antagonists is proven by their frequent condemnation. The fires that were kindled for sorcerers and for heretics flamed just as fiercely for the stubborn volumes which passed the border-land of orthodoxy. Calvin burned all the pamphlets and manuscripts of Servetus at the same time that he burned their author; in consequence of which thoroughness, "Christianismi Restitutio" is said to be one of the rarest dissertations in the world.

For some books that perished at the stake the antiquarian can never mourn enough. An act passed in the short reign of King Edward VI commanded the wholesale destruction of all "antiphones, myssales, scrayles, processionales, manuelles, legendes, pyes, prymars in Lattyn or Inglishe, cowchers, journales, ordinales, or other books or writings whatsoever, heretofore used for the service of the churche, written or prynted in the Inglishe or Lattyn tongue." Owners of these precious volumes were commanded to give them up (heavy fines being exacted for disobedience), that they might be "openlye brent, or otherways defaced and destroied." None were spared, save the "Prymars in the Inglishe or Lattyn tongue set forthe by the late Kinge of famous memorie, Kinge Henrie the eight;" and even from such hallowed pages all "invocations or prayers to saintes" were to be "blotted or clerelye put out." Orthodoxy is a costly indulgence. What treasures were lost to the world, what –

Small rare volumes, dark with tarnished gold,

shrivelled into ashes, that the Book of Common Prayer might rule in undisputed authority and right!

Queen Elizabeth was strenuously opposed to "schismatical" works, as well as to those of a political or diplomatic character. With broad-minded impartiality she burned *all* books and pamphlets which presumed to deal – no matter in what spirit – with subjects she did not wish discussed. Like the old Tory lady who objected to her Tory butler's sentiments, seeing no reason why butlers should have sentiments at all, Elizabeth punished the too effusive piety and patriotism of her subjects as severely as she punished their discontent. The hall kitchen of the Stationers' Company witnessed many a bonfire of books during her reign; and many an incautious author discovered with poor Peter Wentworth that "the anger of a Prince is as the roaring of a Lyon, and even as the messenger of Death." James I favoured St. Paul's churchyard as a spot singularly suitable for the cremation of books; and Oxford and Cambridge had their own exclusive *auto-da-fés* for two centuries and more. Edinburgh, with fine national feeling, burned Drake's "Historia Anglo-Scotica," because its English tone offended Scottish pride; and England burned the Rev. Arthur Bury's "Naked Gospel" in 1690, because she conceived that a rector of Exeter should veil his truths more decently from the eyes of the feeble and profane. The last book to achieve such unmerited distinction in Great Britain was a copy of Mr. Froude's "Nemesis of Faith," which, being discovered in the possession of an Oxford student, was publicly burned by the Rev. William Sewell, Dean of Exeter, in the college hall, on the twenty-seventh of February, 1849. "Oxford," says Mr. James

Anson Farrer, "has always tempered her love for learning with a dislike for inquiry." The incident, being at best unusual, gave such a healthy impetus to the sale of Mr. Froude's work – which had won no wide hearing – that it went into a second edition, and became an object of keen, though temporary, solicitude. Well might the Marquis de Langle say that burning was as a blue ribbon to any book, inspiring interest, and insuring sales. There are those who affirm that the "Index Expurgatorius," by which the Roman Catholic church still seeks to restrain the reading of her children, is a similar spur to curiosity. This I do not believe, having never in my life met a Roman Catholic who knew what works were or were not upon the "Index," or who had been incautious enough to inquire.

The decline of church discipline and the enfeeblement of law permit books now to die a natural death; but the conviction of their powerful and perilous authority still lingers in the teacher's heart. If he knows, as is often the case, much of letters and little of life, he magnifies this authority until it seems the dominant influence of the world. A writer in one of the British quarterlies assures us with almost incredible seriousness that we are at the mercy of the authors whom we read.

"We take a silent, innocent-seeming volume into our hands, and, when we put it down, we shall never again be what we were before.... St. Augustine opened the book, and one single sentence changed him from the brilliant, godless, self-satisfied rhetorician into a powerful religious force. Here, on the other hand, is a youth who opens a mere magazine article written against his faith. He throws off the early influence of home like a mantle, and

plunges thenceforward into the 'sunless gulf of doubt,' with the unspeakable morasses at the bottom."

This is a little like the man who left the Unitarian church because "somebody told him it wasn't true." How is a soul so sensitive to be kept in – or out of – any fold? A religion which dissolves before the persuasions of a magazine article must necessarily be as short-lived as the love – "the slight, thin sort of inclination" – which is starved, so Elizabeth Bennett tells us, by a sonnet. "Ten thousand difficulties," says Cardinal Newman nobly, "do not make one doubt;" but the thinker who cannot surmount the first and feeblest of the difficulties should never have essayed the perilous pathway of the alphabet. Neither was St. Augustine's inspiration a flashlight upon darkness. The "self-satisfied rhetorician" was not converted, like Harlequin, in one dazzling moment. There had been a long and bitter struggle between the forces of life and death, of the spirit and the flesh, before the word of St. Paul penetrated with overwhelming sweetness into a soul cleared by hard thinking, and cleansed by a passion for perfection.

Man may be an unstable creature, – we have been told so until we believe it, – but he parts reluctantly from his convictions, and is slow to break the habits of a lifetime. Hear what Robert Burton has to say about the obstinate perversity of heretics.

"Single out the most ignorant of them. Convince his understanding. Show him his errors. Prove to him the grossness and absurdities of his sect. He will not be persuaded."

He will not, indeed, whether persuasion take the form of a sermon, a magazine article, or the stake. Luther said

that the more he read the Fathers of the early Church, the more he found himself offended; which proves the strength of a mental attitude to resist the most penetrating of influences. Neither are political heretics any easier to enlighten. "Who," asks Lord Coleridge, "ever convinced an antagonist by a speech?" On the contrary, there is a natural and healthy sentiment of revolt when views we do not share are set forth with unbroken continuity and insistence. In the give and take of conversation, in the advance and retreat of argument, in the swift intrusion of the spoken word, made overpowering by the charm of personality, we encounter a force too subtle and personal to be resisted. Unconsciously we yield at some point to the insidious attack of thoughts and ideas so presented as to weaken our individual opposition, and adroitly force an entrance to our souls. But books, like sermons, fail by reason of the smoothness of their current; because there is no backwater to stir the eddies, and whirl us into conflict and submission. We feel that, could we have spent our "mornings in Florence" with Mr. Ruskin, have looked with him at frescoes, tombs, and pavements, and have disputed at every point his magnificent assumption of authority, we might have ended by accepting his most unreasonable and intolerant verdicts. Could we free our souls by expressing to Mr. John Morley our sentiments concerning Mr. Gladstone, we might in return be impelled to share the enthusiasm of the enlightened biographer. But neither Mr. Ruskin nor Mr. Morley has the same power of persuasiveness in print. The simple process of leaving out whatever is antagonistic makes demonstration easy, but inconclusive. Sometimes the robust directness of the method inclines

us peremptorily to resistance. It is hard for a generous heart not to sympathize with the exiled Stewarts, after reading Lord Macaulay's "History of England." Mr. Froude must be held responsible for much of the extravagant enthusiasm professed for the Queen of Scots. And I once knew an intelligent girl who had been driven by Mr. Prescott into worshipping Philip II as a hero.

People who have contracted the habit of writing books are naturally prone to exaggerate their importance. It is this sentiment which has provoked the attitude of fault-finding, of continuous grumbling at readers, which is so marked a characteristic of modern criticism. The public is reproached, admonished, warned by Mr. Frederic Harrison that if it feels contumacious – which is not infrequently the case – it should pray for a "cleanlier and quieter spirit." Whenever a handful of books is presented to a community, addresses are made to show, on the one hand, that reading and writing are better than meat and drink, and, on the other, that the people who read and write are on the brink of abysmal destruction. I have heard a lecturer upon one of these august occasions gloomily prophesy that many of the volumes waiting to be perused would "deprave the taste, irritate the vanity, exaggerate the egotism, and vitiate the curiosity of their readers." This seemed an unfortunate result for philanthropy to achieve; but the speaker went on to excite the godless interest of his audience by warning them that romance – of which the new library was reasonably full – would exercise a "bewildering and blinding effect" upon their minds, "filling them with false hopes and enervating dreams." He then defined a good novel as one which should "stimulate a healthy imagination, a

sober ambition, a modest ardour, an eager humility, a love of what is truly great;" and left us oppressed with the conviction that the usefulness of our earthly careers and the salvation of our immortal souls depended upon the fiction that we read.

"There is no harm," says Mr. Birrell sweetly, "in talking about books, still less in reading them; but it is folly to pretend to worship them." It is folly to exaggerate their controlling influence in our lives. We are not more modestly ardent after reading "Vanity Fair," nor more eagerly humble after spending long and happy hours with "Emma." No sober ambition stirs chastely in our souls when we lay down, with a sigh of content, "Pride and Prejudice," or "Guy Mannering," or "Henry Esmond," or "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel." Even "Anna Karenina" fails to inspire us with "false hopes and enervating dreams;" and while we are often bewildered by Mr. Henry James's masterpieces, we have never been blinded by any. As for the ordinary novels that tumble headlong from the press, it is impossible to imagine them as inspiring either ardour or ambition, egotism or humility. They may perhaps be trusted to weaken our literary instincts, and to induce mental inertia, – "the surest way of having no thoughts of our own," says Schopenhauer, "is to take up a book every time we have nothing to do," – but they are not, as their writers and their critics fearfully assert, the arbiters of our destinies.

A belief in the overpowering influence of books was part of Carlyle's gospel. He had a curious modesty about giving advice, even when it was sought; and – born dictator though he was – he realized that his own literary needs were not necessarily the literary needs of other

men. He said as much quite simply and sincerely when people asked him what they should read, holding always, with Dr. Johnson, that inclination must prompt the choice. To be sure, like Dr. Johnson, and like Emerson, he presupposed inclination to be of an austere and seemly order. Emerson never wearied of saying that people should read what they liked; but he plainly expected them to like only what was good. Carlyle was firmly convinced that authorship carried with it responsibilities too serious for trifling. He reverenced the printed page, and he expressed this reverence, this confession of faith, in the most explicit and comprehensive assertion.

"The writer of a book is he not a preacher, preaching, not to this parish or that, but to all men in all times and places? Not the wretchedest circulating library novel which foolish girls thumb and con in remote villages, but will help to regulate the actual practical weddings and households of those foolish girls."

More than this it would be impossible to say, and few of us, I hope, would be willing to say as much. The idea is too oppressive to be borne. Only authors and critics can afford to take this view of life. Personally I believe that a foolish girl is more influenced by another foolish girl, to say nothing of a foolish boy, than by all the novels on the library shelves. Companionship and propinquity are forces to be reckoned with. Mind touches mind like an electric current. The contagion of folly is spread, like other forms of contagion, by personal contact. Books may, as Carlyle says, preach to all men, in all times and places; but it is precisely their lack of reticence, the universality of their message, their chill publicity of tone which reduces their readers to the level

of an audience or of a congregation. If we recall the disclosures with which we have been favoured from time to time by distinguished people who consented to tell the world what books had influenced their lives, we cannot fail to remember the perfunctory nature of these revelations. It was as though the speakers had first marshalled in order the most enduring masterpieces of literature, and had then fitted their own sentiments and experiences into appropriate grooves. This reversal of a natural law is much in favour when what are called epoch-making books come under public discussion. There are enthusiasts who appear to think that Rousseau evoked the French Revolution, and that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was responsible for the Civil War. When the impetus of a profound and powerful emotion, the mighty will of a great event finds expression in literature, – or at least in letters, – the writer's mind speeds like a greyhound along the track of public sentiment. It does not create the sentiment, it does not appreciably intensify it; but it enables people to perceive more clearly the nature of the course to which they stand committed. These sympathetic triumphs are sometimes mistaken for literary triumphs. They are often thought to lead the chase they follow.

If, on the other hand, we ask ourselves soberly what books have helped to mould our characters or to control our energies, we shall not find the list an imposing one. There will be little or nothing to tell a listening world. Rather may we incline to the open skepticism of Lord Byron: "Who was ever altered by a poem?" Even presuming that we are happy enough to detach ourselves from contemporary criticism, and to read for human delight; even presuming that, after a lifetime of effort, we

have learned to recognize perfection in literary art, and to turn of our own free will to those lonely works which "in the best and noblest sense of a good and noble word, should be, and forever remain, essentially unpopular;" even then it does not follow that we are mastered by the books we love. There still remains to us that painful and unconquerable originality, which is not defiant, but only helplessly incapable of submission. "Giving a reason for a thing," says Dr. Johnson, "does not make it right." Let us hope that being unable to give a reason for a thing does not prove us wrong. The Rev. Mark Pattison, who was the most unflinching reader of his day, who looked upon money only as a substance convertible by some happy alchemy into leather-bound volumes, and upon time only as a possession which could be exchanged for a wider acquaintance with literature, understood better than any scholar in England the limitations and futilities of print. He did not say with Hobbes, "If I had read as much as other men, I should doubtless have shared their ignorance," because he had read more than other men, and was very widely informed; but he pointed out with startling lucidity that a flexible mind fortifies itself rather by conversation, which is the gift of the few, than by reading, which is the resource of the many. "Books," he said, "are written in response to a demand for recreation by minds roused to intelligence, but not to intellectual activity." There is something pathetic in his frankly envious admiration of the French, who can and do convey their thoughts to one another in a language wrought up to be "the perfect medium of wit and wisdom, – the wisdom of the serpent, – the incisive medium of the practical intelligence." He quoted with melancholy

appreciation Lord Houghton's story of the Italian who, after submitting to the heavy hospitality of an English country-house, drew a newly arrived Frenchman into a corner with the eager request: "Viens donc causer. Je n'ai pas causé pour quinze jours."

Mr. Lang is responsible for the statement – spoken, let us hope, in the enjoyment of a sardonic mood rather than after dispassionate observation – that the average Englishman or Englishwoman would as soon think of buying a boa-constrictor as buying a book. He or she depends for intellectual sustenance upon that happy lottery system which has been devised by circulating libraries, and with which Americans are so well acquainted, – a system which enables us to put in a request for Darwin's "Origin of Species," and draw out the Rev. W. Profeit's "Creation of Matter;" to put in a request for "Lady Rose's Daughter," and draw out "The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come." It is evident that reading conducted on this basis is as sure a path to cultivation as a roulette table is to wealth. It has all the charm of uncertainty, and all the value of speculation. It eliminates selection, detaches quantity from quality, and replaces the elusive balancing of results by the unchallenged roll call of statistics. It expresses that unshaken belief which is the gospel of the librarian, – namely, that the number of books taken from his shelves within a given time has something to do with the educational efficiency of his library.

Our power of self-deception – without which we should shrivel into humility – is never so comfortable nor so resourceful as in the matter of reading. We are capable of believing, not only that we love books which we do not love, but that we have read books which we have

not read. A life-long intimacy with their titles, a partial acquaintance with modern criticism, a lively recollection of many familiar quotations, – these things come in time to be mistaken for a knowledge of the books themselves. Perhaps in youth it was our ambitious purpose to storm certain bulwarks of literature, but we were deterred by their unpardonable length. It is a melancholy truth, which may as well be acknowledged in the start, that many of the books best worth reading are very, very long, and that they cannot, without mortal hurt, be shortened. Nothing less than shipwreck on a desert island in company with Froissart's "Chronicles" would give us leisure to peruse this glorious narrative, and it is useless to hope for such a happy combination of chances. We might indeed be wrecked, – that is always a possibility, – but the volume saved dripping from the deep would be "Soldiers of Fortune," or "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch."

It is at least curious that if people love books – as we are perpetually assured they do – they should need so much persuasion to read them. Societies are formed for mutual encouragement and support in this engaging but arduous pursuit. Optimistic counsellors cheer a shrinking public to its task by recommending minute quantities of intellectual nourishment to be taken twenty-four hours apart. They urge us to read something "solid" for fifteen minutes a day, until we get used to it, and they promise us that – mental invalids though we be – we can assimilate great masterpieces in doses so homeopathic that we need hardly know we are taking them. But this is not the spirit in which we pursue other pleasures. We do not make an earnest effort to enjoy our friends by admitting

one for fifteen minutes' conversation every morning. If we like a thing at all, we are apt to like a good deal of it; and if we are working *con amore*, we are wont to work very hard. To turn to books, as Jeremy Collier counsels us, when we are weary alike of solitude and companionship, to value them, as he did, because they help us to forget "the crossness of men and things," is to pay a sincere, but not an ardent, tribute to their worth. Even the Bishop of Durham praised his library, which he truly loved, because it soothed his unquiet soul. The friendly volumes forbore, as he gratefully noted, either to chide his errors or to mock at his ignorance; and there were contemporaries – like Petrarch – who affirmed that, for so ardent a bibliophile, the good Bishop had no great store of learning. His words echo pleasantly through the centuries, breathing the secret of quiet hours stolen from stormy times; and we repeat them, wondering less at their eloquence than at their moderation. "O books, who alone are liberal and free, who give to all who ask of you, and enfranchise all who serve you faithfully."

VI

The Beggar's Pouch

Just Heaven! for what wise reasons hast thou ordered it that beggary and urbanity, which are at such variance in other countries, should find a way to be at unity in this? – STERNE.

A rich American, with a kind heart and a lively sense of humour, was heard to remark as he crossed the Italian frontier, *en route* for Switzerland: "*Now*, if there be any one in the length and breadth of Italy who has not yet begged from me, this is his time to come forward."

It was a genial invitation, betokening that tolerance of mind rarely found in the travelling Saxon, who is fortified against beggars, as against many other foreign institutions, by a petition-proof armour of finely welded principle and prejudice. He disapproves of mendicancy in general. He believes – or he says he believes – that you wrong and degrade your fellow men by giving them money. He has the assurance of his guide-book that the corps of ragged veterans who mount guard over every church door in Rome are unworthy of alms, being themselves capitalists on no ignoble scale. His irritation, when sore beset, is natural and pardonable. His arguments are not easily answered. He can be vaguely statistical, – real figures are hard to come by in Italy, – he can be earnestly philosophical, he can quote Mr. Augustus Hare. In the end, he leaves you perplexed in spirit and dull of heart,

with sixpence saved in your pocket, and the memory of pinched old faces – which do not look at all like the faces of capitalists at home – spoiling your appetite for dinner.

This may be right, but it is a melancholy attitude to adopt in a land where beggary is an ancient and not dishonourable profession. All art, all legend, all tradition, tell for the beggar. The splendid background against which he stands gives colour and dignity to his part. We see him sheltered by St. Julian, – ah, beautiful young beggar of the Pitti! – fed by St. Elizabeth, clothed by St. Martin, warmed by the fagots which St. Francesca Romano gathered for him in the wintry woods. What heavenly blessings have followed the charity shown to his needs! What evils have followed thick and fast where he has been rejected! I remember these things when I meet his piteous face and outstretched palm to-day. It is true that the Italian beggar almost always takes a courteous, or even an impatient denial in wonderfully good part; but, should he feel disposed to be malevolent, I am not one to be indifferent to his malevolence. I do not like to hear a shaken old voice wish that I may die unshriven. There are too many possibilities involved.

So sang a withered Sibyl energetical,
And banned the ungiving door with lips prophetical.

Mr. Henry James is of the opinion (and one envies him his ability to hold it) that "the sum of Italian misery is, on the whole, less than the sum of the Italian knowledge of life. That people should thank you, with a smile of enchanting sweetness, for the gift of twopence is a proof certainly of an extreme and constant destitution; but – keeping in mind the sweetness – it is also a proof of a

fortunate ability not to be depressed by circumstances." This is a comforting faith to foster, and more credible than the theory of secreted wealth within the beggar's pouch. It takes a great many pennies to build up a substantial fortune, and the competition in mendicancy is too keen to permit of the profits being large. The business, like other roads to fortune, is "not what it once was." A particularly good post, long held and undisputed, an imposingly venerable and patriarchal appearance, a total absence of legs or arms, – these things may lead to modest competency; but these things are rare equipments. My belief in the affluence of beggars, a belief I was cherishing carefully for the sake of my own peace of mind, received a rude shock when I beheld a crippled old woman, whose post was in the Piazza S. Claudio, tucked into a doorway one cold December midnight, her idle crutches lying on her knees. If she had had a comfortable or even an uncomfortable home to go to, why should she have stayed to shiver and freeze in the deserted Roman streets?

The latitude extended by the Italian Church to beggars, the patronage shown them, never ceases to vex the tourist mind. An American cannot reconcile himself to marching up the church steps between two rows of mendicants, each provided with a chair, a little *scaldino*, and a tin cup, in which a penny rattles lustily. There is nothing casual about the appearance of these freeholders. They make no pretence – as do beggars at home – of sudden emergency or frustrated hopes. They are following their daily avocation, – the only one for which they are equipped, – and following it in a spirit of acute and healthy rivalry. To give to one and not to all is to

arouse such a clamorous wail that it seems, on the whole, less stony-hearted to refuse altogether. Once inside the sacred walls, we find a small and well-selected body of practitioners hovering around the portals, waiting to exact their tiny toll when we are ready to depart. "Exact" is not too strong a word to use, for I have had a lame but comely young woman, dressed in decent black, with a black veil framing her expressive face, hold the door of the Aracœli firmly barred with one arm, while she swept the other toward me in a gesture so fine, so full of mingled entreaty and command, that it was worth double the fee she asked. Occasionally – not often – an intrepid beggar steals around during Mass, and, touching each member of the congregation on the shoulder, gently implores an alms. This is a practice frowned upon as a rule, save in Sicily, where a "plentiful poverty" doth so abide that no device for moving compassion can be too rigidly condemned. I have been present at a high Mass in Palermo, when a ragged woman with a baby in her arms moved slowly after the sacristan, who was taking up the offertory collection, and took up a second collection of her own, quite as though she were an authorized official. It was a scandalous sight to Western eyes, – in our well-ordered churches at home such a proceeding would be as impossible as a trapeze performance in the aisle, – but what depths of friendly tolerance it displayed, what gentle, if inert, compassion for the beggar's desperate needs!

For in Italy, as in Spain, there is no gulf set, between the rich and poor. What these lands lack in practical philanthropy is atoned for by a sweet and universal friendliness of demeanour, and by a prompt recognition

of rights. It would be hard to find in England or in America such tattered rags, such gaunt faces and hungry eyes; but it would be impossible to find in Italy or in Spain a church where rags are relegated to some inconspicuous and appropriate background. The Roman beggar jostles – but jostles urbanely – the Roman prince; the noblest and the lowliest kneel side by side in the Cathedral of Seville. I have heard much all my life about the spirit of equality, and I have listened to fluent sermons, designed to prove that Christians, impelled by supernatural grace, love this equality with especial fervour; but I have never seen its practical workings, save in the churches of southern Europe. There tired mothers hush their babies to sleep, and wan children play at ease in their Father's house. There I have been privileged to stand for hours, during long and beautiful services, because the only available chairs had been appropriated by forlorn creatures who would not have been permitted to intrude into the guarded pews at home.

It has been always thus. We have the evidence of writers who give it with reluctant sincerity; of Borrow, for example, who firmly believed he hated many things for which he had a natural and visible affinity. "To the honour of Spain be it spoken," he writes in "The Bible in Spain," "that it is one of the few countries in Europe where poverty is never insulted nor looked upon with contempt. Even at an inn the poor man is never spurned from the door, and, if not harboured, is at least dismissed with fair words, and consigned to the mercies of God and His Mother."

The more ribald Nash, writing centuries earlier, finds no words too warm in which to praise the charities of

Catholic Rome. "The bravest Ladies, in gownes of beaten gold, washing pilgrims' and poor soldiours' feete. . . . This I must say to the shame of us English; if good workes may merit Heaven, they doe them, we talk about them."

The Roman ladies "doe them" still; not so picturesquely as they did three hundred years ago, but in the same noble and delicate spirit. Their means and their methods are far below the means and methods of charitable organizations in England and America. They cannot find work where there is no work to be done. They cannot lift the hopeless burden of want which is the inevitable portion of the Italian poor. They can at best give only the scanty loaf which keeps starvation from the door. They cannot educate the children, nor make the swarming populace of Rome "self-respecting," by which we mean self-supporting. But they can and do respect the poverty they alleviate. Their mental attitude is simpler than ours. They know well that it is never the wretchedly poor who "fear fate and cheat nature," and they see, with more equanimity than we can muster, the ever recurring tragedy of birth. The hope, so dear to our Western hearts, of ultimately raising the whole standard of humanity shines very dimly on their horizon; but if they plan less for the race, they draw closer to the individual. They would probably, if questioned, say frankly with Sir Thomas Browne: "I give no alms only to satisfy the hunger of my Brother, but to fulfil and accomplish the Will and Command of my God." And if the "Religio Medici" be somewhat out of date, – superseded, we are told, by a finer altruism which rejects the system of reward, – we may still remember Mr. Pater's half rueful admission that it was all "pure profit" to its holder.

The Beggar's Pouch

When Charles Lamb lamented, with innate perversity, the decay of beggars, he merely withdrew his mind from actualities, – which always annoyed him, – and set it to contemplate those more agreeable figures which were not suffering under the disadvantage of existence. It was the beggar of romance, of the ballads, of the countryside, of the merry old songs, whose departure he professed to regret. The outcast of the London streets could not have been – even in Lamb's time – a desirable feature. To-day we find him the most depressing object in the civilized world; and the fact that he is what is called, in the language of the philanthropist, "unworthy," makes him no whit more cheerful of contemplation. The ragged creature who rushes out of the darkness to cover the wheel of your hansom with his tattered sleeve manages to convey to your mind a sense of degraded wretchedness, calculated to lessen the happiness of living. His figure haunts you miserably, when you want to forget him and be light of heart. By his side, the venerable, white-bearded old humbugs who lift the leather curtains of Roman and Venetian churches stand forth as cheerful embodiments of self-respecting mendicancy. They, at least, are no pariahs, but recognized features of the social system. They are the Lord's poor, whose prayers are fertile in blessings. It is kind to drop a coin into the outstretched band, and to run the risk – not so appalling as we seem to think – of its being unworthily bestowed. "Rake not into the bowels of unwelcome truth to save a halfpenny;" but remember, rather, the ever-ready alms of Dr. Johnson, who pitied most those who were least deserving of compassion. Little doubt that he was often imposed upon. The fallen women went on their way,

sinning as before. The "old struggler" probably spent his hard-earned shilling for gin. The sick beggar whom he carried on his back should by rights have been languishing in the poorhouse. But the human quality of his kindness made it a vital force, incapable of waste. It warmed sad hearts in his unhappy time, as it warms our sad hearts now. Like the human kindness of St. Martin, it still remains – a priceless heritage – to enrich us poor beggars in sentiment to-day.

And this reminds me to ask – without hope of answer – if the blessed St. Martin can be held responsible for the number of beggars in Tours? The town is not pinched and hunger-bitten like the sombre old cities of Italy, but possesses rather an air of comfort and gracious prosperity. It is in the heart of a province where cruel poverty is unknown, and where "thrift and success present themselves as matters of good taste." Yet we cannot walk half an hour in Tours without meeting a number of highly respectable beggars, engrossed in their professional duties. They do not sin against the harmony of their surroundings by any revolting demonstration of raggedness or penury. On the contrary, they are always neat and decent; and on Sundays have an aspect of such unobtrusive well-being that one would never suspect them of mendicancy. When a clean, comfortably dressed old gentleman, with a broad straw hat, and a rosebud in his buttonhole, crosses the street to affably ask an alms, I own I am surprised, until I remember St. Martin, who, fifteen hundred years ago, shared his mantle with the beggar shivering by the way. It was at Amiens that the incident occurred, but the soldier saint became in time the apostle and bishop of Tours; wherefore it is in Tours,

and not in Amiens, that beggars do plentifully abound to-day; it is in Tours, and not in Amiens, that the charming old tale moves us to sympathy with their not very obvious needs. They are an inheritance bequeathed us by the saint. They are in strict accord with the traditions of the place. I am told that giving sous to old men at church doors is not a practical form of benevolence; but neither was it practical to cut a military cloak in two. Something must be allowed to impulse, something to the generous unreason of humanity.

And, after all, it is not begging, but only the beggar who has forfeited favour with the elect. We are begged from on an arrogantly large scale all our lives, and we are at liberty to beg from others. It may be wrong to give ten cents to a legless man at a street corner; but it is right, and even praiseworthy, to send ten tickets for some dismal entertainment to our dearest friend, who must either purchase the dreaded things or harass her friends in turn. If we go to church, we are confronted by a system of begging so complicated and so resolute that all other demands sink into insignificance by its side. Mr. John Richard Green, the historian, was wont to maintain that the begging friar of the pre-reform period, "who at any rate had the honesty to sing for his supper, and preach a merry sermon from the portable pulpit he carried round," had been far outstripped by a "finer mendicant," the begging rector of to-day. A hospital nurse once told me that she was often too tired to go to church – when free – on Sundays. "But it does n't matter whether I go or not," she said with serious simplicity, "because in our church we have the envelope system." When asked what the system was which thus lifted churchgoing

from the number of Christian obligations, she explained that envelopes marked with each Sunday's date were distributed to the congregation, and duly returned with a quarter inclosed. When she stayed at home, she sent the envelope to represent her. The collecting of the quarters being the pivotal feature of the Sunday's service, her duty was fulfilled.

With this, and many similar recollections in my mind, I own I am disposed to think leniently of Italy's church-door mendicants. How moderate their demands, how disproportionate their gratitude, how numberless their disappointments, how unfailing their courtesy! I can push back a leather curtain for myself, I can ring a sacristan's bell. But the patriarch who relieves me of these duties has some dim, mysterious right to stand in my way, – a right I cannot fathom, but will not pretend to dispute. He is, after all, a less insistent beggar than are the official guardians of galleries and museums, who relieve the unutterable weariness of their idle days by following me from room to room with exasperating explanations, until I pay them to go away. I have heard tourists protest harshly against the ever-recurring obligation of giving pennies to the old men who, in Venice, draw their gondolas to shore, and push them out again. They say – what is perfectly true – that it is an extortion to be compelled to pay for unasked and unnecessary services, and they generally add something about not minding the money. It is the principle of the thing to which they are opposed. But these picturesque accessories of Venetian life are, for the most part, worn-out gondoliers, whose days of activity are over, and who are saved from starvation, only by the semblance of service they perform.

Their successors connive at their pretence of usefulness, knowing that some day they, too, must drop their oars, and stand patiently waiting, hook in hand, for the chance coin that is so grudgingly bestowed. That it should be begrudged – even on principle – seems strange to those whose love for Venice precludes the possibility of fault-finding. The graybeards sunning themselves on the marble steps are as much a part of the beautiful city as are the gondoliers silhouetted against the sky, or the brown boys paddling in the water. Such old age is meagre, but not wholly forlorn. A little food keeps body and soul together, and life yields sweetness to the end. "It takes a great deal to make a successful American," confesses Mr. James; "but to make a happy Venetian takes only a handful of quick sensibility.... Not the misery of Italians, but the way they elude their misery, is what pleases the sentimental tourist, who is gratified by the sight of a beautiful race that lives by the aid of its imagination."

VII

The Pilgrim's Staff

Thries hadde she been at Jerusalem;
She hadde passed many a straunge strem;
At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,
At Galice at Seint Jame, and at Coloigne;
She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.
– Chaucer

The spirit that animated the Crusader animated the pilgrim. Piety, curiosity, the love of God and the love of adventure, the natural sentiment which makes one spot of ground more hallowed than another, – a sentiment as old as religion, – the natural restlessness of the human heart, – a restlessness as old as humanity. With the decay of the Crusades began the passion for pilgrimages, which reached its height in the fourteenth century, but which at a much earlier period had begun to send men wandering from land to land, and from sea to sea, broadening their outlook, sharpening their intelligence, uniting them in a common bond of faith and sympathy, teaching them to observe the virtues of hospitality, courtesy, and kindness. Much has been urged against the pilgrim, even the genuine pilgrim; but it counts for little when contrasted with his merits. His was not the wisdom of Franklin. He spent time, strength, and money with reckless prodigality. He neglected duties near at hand; he ran sharp risks of shipwreck, robbers, and pestilence. But he was lifted, for a time at least, out of the common

round of life; he aspired, however lamely, after spiritual growth; and he assisted the slow progress of civilization by breaking through the barriers which divided nation from nation in the remoteness of the Middle Ages.

The universality of a custom is pledge of its worth. Pious Egyptians speeding along the waterways to the temple of Bubastis; pious Hindoos following from hermitage to hermitage the footsteps of the exiled Rama; pious Moslems making their painful journey to Mecca; pious Christians turning their rapt faces to Palestine, – from the dawn of history to the present day we see the long procession of pilgrims moving to and fro over the little earth, linking shore to shore and century to century. Never without disaster, never without privations, never without the echoes of disparagement, never wholly discouraged nor abashed, the procession winds brokenly along. The pilgrims who visit Lourdes in this year of grace are not mere victims of a spasmodic enthusiasm. They are the inheritors of the world's traditions and of the world's emotions.

Alexander, Bishop of Cappadocia, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the year 202. He was by no means the first ecclesiastic to undertake the journey, but the records that survive from this period of limited authorship are few and far between. It was not until a century later that the Empress Helena stirred the hearts of Christendom, and gave the impetus that sent thousands of pilgrims to follow the footsteps of the Redeemer. Many who could not reach Palestine travelled as far as Rome, to pray at the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul. From time to time the church gently checked an enthusiasm which overstepped the bounds of reason. Women, then

condemned to much staying at home, showed an ardour for pilgrimage as natural as it was disconcerting. Nuns joyously welcomed the opportunity to leave, without broken vows, their convent walls, and tread for a time the beaten paths of earth. They found shelter on the road in other houses of religion, where all such devout wanderers were lodged and generously entertained.

For the virtues which blossomed most fairly along the pilgrim's track were chivalry and hospitality. For him a brotherhood of knights guarded the robber-haunted forests of Germany. For him the Spanish nobles kept watch and ward over their mountain passes. For him the galleys of St. John swept the Mediterranean in search of Algerine pirates. For him the Hospitalers built their first asylum. For him rang out the Templar's battlecry, "Beauceant! Beauceant!" as the dreaded banner of black and white bore down into the fray. The pilgrim paid no tithes nor tolls. Monasteries opened to him their gates. In every seaport, and in many a royal burgh, houses were erected and maintained for his accommodation. In Calais stood the old Maison Dieu, with its wide, hospitable doors. Coventry was the first of English towns to provide a similar shelter. These houses were either endowed by pious benefactors or were supported by the strong and wealthy guilds. In Lincoln, the Guild of the Resurrection, founded in 1374, had the following rule: "If any brother wishes to make a pilgrimage to Rome, to Saint James of Galicia, or to the Holy Land, he shall forewarn the Guild; and all the members shall go with him to the city gate, and each shall give him at least a half-penny." Other guilds lent weightier service. Turn where we may, we see on every side the animosities of nations softened

and the self-seeking of the human heart subdued by the force of that *esprit de corps* which bound hard-fighting Christendom together.

Rivalry there was in plenty, as shrine after shrine rose into fame and fortune. Palestine lay far away, and the journey thither was beset by difficulties and dangers. Rome held the great relics which from earliest years had drawn thousands of pilgrims to worship at her altars. Spain came next in degree, with the famous shrine of Compostela in Galicia, where lay the bones of her patron, St. James. So popular was this pilgrimage that in the year 1434 no less than 2460 licenses were granted in England to travellers bound for Compostella. Cologne claimed the relics of the Magi; France, the Holy Coat of Trèves, the shrine of St. Martin of Tours, and the beautiful pilgrimage churches of Boulogne and Rocamadour. The last, fair still in its decay, was one of the most celebrated in Europe. Great kings and greater soldiers, Simon de Montfort among them, had come as penitents to its rock-built sanctuary; and so many English were counted among its visitors that we find that arch-grumbler, Piers Plowman, bitterly conjuring his countrymen to stay away.

> *Right so, if thou be Religious, renne thou never ferther*
> *To Rome ne to Rochemadore.*

In good truth there were shrines in plenty at home. Glastonbury, the resting-place of Joseph of Arimathea, where grew the holy thorn-tree; Bury Saint Edmunds, where all might see the standard of the martyred king, and where, to keep it company, Cœur de Lion sent the captured banner of the king of Cyprus; Waltham, or Holy

Cross Abbey, founded by that devout and warlike Dane, Tovi, to guard the mysterious cross of black marble, of which none knew the history; Edward the Confessor's tomb at Westminster; Our Lady of Walsingham, the best-loved church in England; and the ever-famous shrine of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. "Optimus aegrorum medicus fit Thomas Bonorum," was the motto engraved on the little pewter flasks brought back by Canterbury pilgrims. "For good people who are ill, Thomas is the best of physicians."

Miracles apart, it was well to take the open road, and to live for a few days, or for a few weeks, in rain and sunshine. It was well to escape the dreadful ministrations of doctors, and trust to St. Thomas, who at all events would not bleed and purge his patient's life away. It was well to quit the foulness of the towns, to push aside the engrossing cares of life, and to see the fair face of an English summer.

I think the long ride in the open air,
That pilgrimage over stocks and stones,
In the miracle must come in for a share!

Many a cure was wrought before the shrine was gained, and a hopeful heart is ever a tonic for body and soul together. The most constant and the most curious reproach cast by reformers at the pilgrims is that they were cheerful, even merry, and that they went their way in what seems to have been an irritating spirit of enjoyment. One Master William Thorpe, a sour and godly man, protested sternly in 1407 against the number of "men and women that go on pilgrimages to Canterbury, to Beverley, to Karlington, to Walsinghame, or to any

such other places"! His accusations were three in number. The pilgrims spent "their goodes in waste," – which was true. They boasted, not always truthfully, of what they had seen, – a reprehensible habit of travellers since man first roamed the earth. And, worst of all, they sang, rang little bells, – the Canterbury bells, – and made a joyous clatter on the road. To this, Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, deeming light hearts as near to grace as sad ones, stoutly replied that pilgrims did well to sing and be as cheerful as the hardships of the way permitted. If a man's foot were cut and bleeding, it were better for him to sing than to be silent, "for with soche solace the travell and wearinesse of pylgremes is lightely and merily broughte forthe."

Not all pilgrimages, however, were undertaken in this jocund spirit. Figures terrible and tragic loom up in the darkness of history. Fulk Nerra, the black Count of Anjou, driven like Orestes by the stings of conscience, wandered from shrine to shrine, seeking pardon for nameless crimes. By his own command he was dragged barefooted through the streets of Jerusalem, his blood running down beneath the pitiless strokes of the scourge. From Guyenne to Picardy walked two noble Breton brothers, their heavy chains eating into their flesh, their heavier hearts burdened with unendurable remorse. Even less sinful men were sometimes inclined to penitence. The Lord of Joinville, before setting forth with St. Louis on the Seventh Crusade, walked in his shirt to every shrine within twenty leagues of his castle, imploring strength of arm and grace of soul. In blither mood, the Viscount De Werchin, Seneschal of Hainault, started upon a pilgrimage to St. James of Compostella. The journey was

long, and by way of diversifying it, the good Seneschal despatched messengers announcing his readiness to meet any knight, French, English, or Spanish, who would engage with him in a friendly passage of arms. That none who coveted this distinction might be so unfortunate as to lose it, he gave his itinerary with great care, and even offered to turn aside from his road as far as twenty leagues, for the felicity of a little fighting. Surely St. James, the patron of soldiers, who has himself turned the tide of more than one hard-fought battle, must have smiled kindly upon that brave and pious pilgrim, when he knelt in his battered armour before the glittering shrine.

Kings and princes frequently went upon pilgrimages. The sprig of broom, the *planta genistae*, destined to give its name to a great and royal line, was worn by Geoffrey of Anjou – some said in token of humility – when he journeyed to the Holy Land. Henry the Second of England travelled piously to Rocamadour, and four English Edwards knelt in turn at the feet of Our Lady of Walsingham. Jusserand tells us that the royal fee on such occasions was seven shillings; the ordinances of Edward the Second make especial mention of the sum. It does not seem munificent, when we remember that Canute took off his crown and laid it on St. Edmund's shrine; but there were occasions when even seven shillings were notably lacking. The Chronicles of Jocelin of Brakelond, quoted by Carlyle in "Past and Present," relate minutely how King John came to St. Edmundsbury with a large retinue, how he gave the abbot thirteen pence, beseeching in return a Mass, and presented to the shrine a silken cloak, which was carried promptly away by one

of his followers, so that the monks beheld it no more. When Henry the Eighth and Catharine of Aragon visited Walsingham, the king hung around the statue's neck a string of pearls and golden beads, and perhaps was not unmoved subsequently by a desire to have it back again.

"Of all our Ladyes, I love best our Lady of Walsyngham," says Sir Thomas More in one of his "Dyalogues," reflecting the common sentiment of the past three hundred years, and defending the ancient custom of pilgrimages from the raillery of Erasmus. The road to Walsingham, like the road to Canterbury, was called the "Pilgrims' Way;" the town was full of inns and lodgings for the accommodation of the devout, and "manye faire myracles" were witnessed at the shrine. When the Norman knight, Sir Raaf de Boitetourt, fled from his burning castle, he sought refuge at Walsingham, where for seven years he had kept vigil on the eve of Epiphany. Hard pressed, he reached the doors, and the Virgin, mindful of faithful service, opened them with her own hands, and drew him swiftly and gently within her blessed walls.

Frequent mention is made of Walsingham in state papers and in family chronicles. The Paston letters contain numerous allusions to this popular shrine. John Paston's wife, troubled by the news of her husband's illness, writes to him lovingly: "My mother behested [vowed] another image of wax of the weight of you to our Lady of Walsingham; and she sent four nobles to the four orders of friars at Norwich to pray for you; and I have behested a pilgrimage to Walsingham and to St. Leonards for you." Again, Justice Yelverton thanks John Paston, "especially for that ye do much for our Lady's house at Walsingham, which I trust verily ye do the

rather for the great love that ye deem I have thereto; for truly if I be drawn to any worship or welfare, and discharge of mine enemies' danger, I ascribe it unto our Lady."

In proportion to the piety of the pilgrim flames the wrath of the reformer. Denunciations from poets of a radical turn, like Langland and Skelton, echo shrilly through English letters.

Pylgrimis and palmers plyghten hem togederes,
To seken seint James and seintes at Rome,
Wenten forth in hure way with many unwyse tales,
And haven leve to lyen alle hure Iyf-tyme.

This sounds like the bitterness of the stay-at-home, resenting with his whole soul the allurement of travellers' tales, – tales to which Chaucer lent a tolerant ear. A century and a half later, when reform had had its way, when the relics of St. Thomas had been scattered to the winds, when our Lady's image had been flung from its altar into the nearest well, and Cranmer in his "Catechism" had alluded to vows and pilgrimages as half-forgotten errors, one poor faithful soul was accused in 1542 of going to Walsingham, – not blithely, indeed, with song and ringing of bells, but sad, fearful, and forlorn, to pray at the defaced and empty shrine.

There was a little chapel built on one of the eastern piers of old London Bridge, and dedicated to St. Thomas à Becket. Hither came the pilgrims bound for Canterbury, or for the far-off shrines of Compostela and Rocamadour, to beg a blessing on their journey; and many were the curious eyes that watched them faring forth. To-day, when no spot is remote, and nothing is unknown, it is

hard to understand the interest which once attached itself to the wanderer, or to realize his importance as a link in the human chain. At a time when the mass of mankind learned orally what it learned at all, when news crept slowly over the country-side, and rumour passed from one village ale-house to another, people were preserved from mental stagnation by the "anwyse tales" which Langland found so reprehensible. They heard how a fair and famous courtesan, smitten with blindness, travelled to Rocamadour, beseeching a cure, and how, kneeling outside the walls, she was withheld by an invisible power from entering the sanctuary. Then, confessing her sins with tears and lamentations, she cut off her beautiful hair, –

A net
Wherein no more shall souls be snared and slain,

and offered it to the Virgin in token of amendment. This being done, the barrier was lifted, she hastened into the church, "giving praise to the Mother of God," and sight was restored to her eyes.

Many were the miracles related by pilgrims, and bewildering were the wonders they described. The zeal for relics having far outrun discretion, a vast hoard of heterogeneous and apocryphal objects had been collected in every church, and were reverenced indiscriminately by the devout. They were less grisly, but hardly less marvellous than the weapons which Christian found in the house of Prudence, Piety, and Charity, when these benevolent ladies exhibited to their guest the "engines with which God's servants had done wonderful things." Christian's delight over the hammer and nail with which

Jael killed Sisera, the sling and stone with which David killed Goliath, the jaw bone of an ass with which Samson killed the Philistines, and the ox goad with which Shamgar killed six hundred of his enemies, is but the reflection of a gentler sentiment which stirred the pilgrim's heart. Our ancestors were not wont to reason very distinctly on these or on other matters; the abnormal offered no obstacle to their credulity; and the complete absence of an historic background annihilated for them a dozen and more intervening centuries. The Holy Coat carried them in spirit to Nazareth, the Veil of Veronica led them to the foot of the Cross. When told that the head of St. John the Baptist reposed in a church at Amiens, they neither calculated the probabilities of the case nor inquired into ways and means. When a few far-travelled pilgrims heard that the same relic was claimed by a church in Constantinople, they either became partisans – a natural sentiment – or argued with the simple sagacity of Sir John Mandeville. Which was the true head he could not tell. "I wot nere but God knowethe; but in what wyse that men worschippen it, the blessed seynte John holt him a-payd."

This is the pith and marrow of the argument. Pilgrims, reaching back dimly into a shrouded past, grasped at the relic which bridged for them the chasm, and felt the mysterious blessedness of association. If it were not what it was believed to be, the saints, well aware both of men's fallibility and of their good faith, would undoubtedly "holt them a-payd." The same sentiment hallowed countless shrines, and found expression in the *sygnys* or medals which then, as now, played a prominent part in pilgrimages. We know how little such customs

change when we read of the fourteenth-century pilgrims at Rocamadour, and see the twentieth-century pilgrims at Lourdes. The Rocamadour medals were made of pewter, stamped with an image of the Virgin, and pierced with holes so that they could be sewn to the cap or dress. The right to make and sell them belonged exclusively to the family of De Valon, and had been granted by the crown in return for military service. So large were the sales, and so comfortable the profits, that the thrifty townspeople constantly infringed upon the seignorial privilege, and flooded the market, in defiance of all authority, with contraband medals, – a pardonable offence, not without parallel in every age and land.

The Canterbury *sygnys* were in the shape of little flasks; at Compostella they were minute cockle-shells; at Amiens they bore the head of St. John the Baptist: "Ecce signum faciei beati Johannis Baptista." So pleased were pilgrims with these devices, and so proud to wear the mementoes of their piety, – as the Moslem, returned from Mecca, wears his green turban, – that we find Erasmus mocking at their appearance "clothyd with cockleschelles, and laden on every side with bunches of lead and tynne." There is not a shrine in Europe today unprovided with similar tokens. At Auray, medals of St. Anne; at Padua, medals of St. Anthony; at Avila, medals of St. Theresa; at Prague, medals of the Holy Infant; at Loretto, medals of the Santa Casa; at Genazzana, medals of Our Lady of Good Counsel; at Paray-le-Monial, medals of the Sacred Heart; at the charming old pilgrimage church of Maria Plain near Salzburg, medals of the Blessed Virgin uncovering the Divine Child; at Lourdes, more

medals and rosaries than one can imagine all Catholic Christendom buying in the next three hundred years.

Yet bought they are, and could Erasmus behold the pilgrims leaving Lourdes, he would deem himself once more on the Walsingham way. It is well to watch the French country people, laden with the heavy baskets which hold their supply of food, grasping the inevitable umbrellas, as big and bulky as folded tents, and burdened furthermore with an assortment of pious souvenirs that require the utmost care in handling. They move slowly in little groups from image to image in the lower church. Some scholar of the party spells out the name of each saint, and then all softly rub their miscellaneous treasures – beads, scapular, medals, *bénitiers* – up and down the statue's robe and feet. Some old, old, misty notion of the blessedness of touch dwells confusedly in every mind. Their contentment is beautiful to behold. They alone know by what sacrifices and privations these days of pilgrimage were made possible; but we know how much they have gained. New sensations; the sudden opening of the world's closed doors, revealing to them a little corner amid wide mysterious spaces; the stirring of the heart in the presence of sacred things; one keen experience in a monotonously bucolic life; one deep breath of a diviner air; something desired, achieved, and ever to be remembered, – what generous mind doubts that all this is better than sensibly staying at home? No observer could have stood at the doors of St. Peter's in the spring of 1900, when the pilgrims of every land thronged up the sunlit steps, without learning once for all the value of emotions. The crowd stared, jostled, chattered, as it swept along, and then, entering those vast, harmonious

aisles, fell silent, while there came into every face a look that could never be mistaken nor forgotten. It was the leaping of the human soul to the ideal. It was an inarticulate *nunc dimittis*, as the pilgrim entered upon the inheritance of ages.

VIII

A Quaker Diary

De tous ces titres, celui que j'aime le mieux est celui de Philadelphien, ami des frères. *Il y a bien des sortes de vanité, mais la plus belle est celle qui, ne s'arrogeant aucun titre, rend presque tous les autres ridicules.* – VOLTAIRE

It is well for us who are interested in colonial days and colonial ways that their leisure gave men and women ample opportunity to keep diaries, and that a modesty now quite unknown made them willing to spend long hours in writing pages not destined for publication. There is something very charming about this old-fashioned, long-discarded reticence, this deliberate withholding of trivial incidents and fleeting impressions from the wide-mouthed curiosity of the crowd. Even when the Revolution had awakened that restless spirit of change which scorned the sobriety of the past, there lingered still in people's hearts an inherited instinct of reserve. Men breakfasted with Washington, dined with John Adams, fought by the side of La Fayette, and never dreamed of communicating these details to the world. Women danced at the redcoat balls, or curtsied and yawned at Mrs. Washington's receptions, and then went home and confided their experiences either to their friends, in long, gossiping letters, or to the secret pages of their diaries.

It was a lamentable waste of "copy," but a saving of dignity and self-respect.

As for the earlier, easier days, when the infant colonies waxed fat on beef and ale, literary aspirations had not then begun to afflict the hearts of men. It is delightful to think how well little Philadelphia, like New York, got along without so much as a printing press, when she had starved out her only printer, Bradford, – a most troublesome and seditious person, – and sent him over to little Boston, which even then had more patience than her neighbours with books. Yet all this time, honest citizens were transcribing in letters and in journals whatever was of daily interest or importance to them; and it is by help of these letters and these journals that we now look back upon that placid past, and realize the everyday existence of ordinary people, nearly two centuries ago. We know through them, and through them only, what manner of lives our forefathers led in Puritan New England, in comfortable Dutch New York, in demure Quaker Pennsylvania, before the sharp individuality of each colony was merged into the common tide, and with the birth of a nation – "a respectable nation," to use the words of Washington, who was averse to glittering superlatives – the old order passed away forever from the land.

"It is to the pages of Judge Sewall's diary," writes Alice Morse Earle, "that we must turn for any definite or extended contemporary picture of colonial life in New England;" just as we turn for the corresponding picture of old England to the diaries of John Evelyn and of Mr. Samuel Pepys. Mrs. Earle does not add, though she well might, that it is better discipline to read Judge Sewall's records than those of all the other diarists in

Christendom; for, by contrast with the bleak cheerlessness of those godly days, our own age seems flooded with sunshine, and warm with the joy of life. And not our own age only. If we pass from ice-bound Massachusetts to colonies less chilly and austere, we step at once into a different world, a tranquil and very comfortable world; not intellectual nor anxiously religious, but full of eating and drinking, and the mildest of mild amusements, and general prosperity and content. Even the Pennsylvania Quakers, though not permitted to dally openly with flaunting and conspicuous pleasures, with blue ribbons, coloured waistcoats, or the shows of itinerant mummers, enjoyed a fair share of purely mundane delights. If Judge Sewall's journal tells us plainly and pitilessly the story of Puritanism, what it really meant in those early uncompromising days, what virtues it nourished, what sadness it endured, the diary of a Philadelphia Friend gives us a correspondingly clear insight into that old-time Quakerism, gentle, silent, tenacious, inflexible, which is now little more than a tradition in the land, yet which has left its impress forever upon the city it founded and sustained.

Elizabeth Sandwith, better known as Elizabeth Drinker, – though even that name has an unfamiliar sound, save to her descendants and to a few students of local history, – was born in Philadelphia in 1735. She was the daughter of wealthy Friends, and her education, liberal for those days, would not be deemed much amiss even in our own. It included a fair knowledge of French and a very admirable familiarity with English. She read books that were worth the reading, and she wrote with ease, conciseness, and subdued humour. Her diary, begun in

1758, was continued without interruption for forty-nine years. It is valuable, not only as a human document, and as a clear, graphic, unemotional narrative of the most troubled and triumphant period in our country's history, but because it contains a careful record of events which – of the utmost importance to the local historian – may be searched for in vain elsewhere. The entries are for the most part brief, and to this brevity, no doubt, we owe the persevering character of the work. It is the enthusiasm with which the young diarist usually sets about her task that threatens its premature collapse. She begins by being unduly confidential, and ends by having nothing to confide.

Not so this Quaker girl, reticent even with herself; avoiding, even in the secret pages of her journal, all gossip about her own soul, all spiritual outpourings, all the dear and inexhaustible delights of egotism. She notes down, indeed, every time she goes to meeting, and also the date on which she begins to work "a large worsted Bible cover," – which Bible cover is in the possession of her great-great-grandchildren today; but neither the meetings nor the worsted work betray her into a complacent piety, and she is just as careful to say when she has been drinking tea, or spending the afternoon with any of her young friends. As a matter of fact, tea-drinking and kindred frivolities are evidently more to her liking, though she will not confess it, than serious and improving occupations. Philadelphia, dazzled by Franklin's discoveries, was pleased to think herself scientific in those days; and young men and women were in the habit of attending learned lectures, – or what were then thought learned lectures, – and pretending they understood and enjoyed them, – a mental attitude not

wholly unfamiliar to us now. So keen was the thirst for knowledge that men paid four shillings for the privilege of looking at a skeleton and some anatomical models in the Pennsylvania Hospital. Our Quaker Elizabeth, however, will have none of these dreary pastimes. To electricity and to skeletons she is alike indifferent; but she pays two shillings cheerfully to see a lioness, exhibited by some enterprising showman, and she records without a scruple that she and her family gave the really exorbitant sum of six shillings and sixpence for a glimpse at a strange creature which was carried about in a barrel, and which its owner said was half man and half beast, but which turned out to be a young baboon, very sick and sad. "I felt sorry for the poor thing, and wished it back in its own country," says the gentle-hearted Quakeress, who has always a pitying word for beasts.

The fidelity with which this delightful journal is kept enables us to know what sober diversions fell to the lot of strict Friends, to whom the famous Philadelphia Dancing Assemblies and the equally famous old Southwark Theatre were alike forbidden joys; who never witnessed the glories of the Mischianza, nor the gay routs of the redcoat winter; who, though loyal to the crown, shared in none of the festivities of the king's birthday; who were too circumspect even to join the little group of Quaker ladies for whom M. de Luzerne prepared a separate apartment at the beautiful *fête du Dauphin*, and who, wistful and invisible, watched through a gauze curtain the brilliant scene in which they had no share.

None of these dallyings with the world, the flesh, and the devil, no glimpses into the fast-growing dissipation of the gayest and most extravagant city in the colonies,

find a record in Elizabeth Drinker's diary. Her utmost limit of frivolity is reached in a sleighing party on a winter afternoon; in tea-drinking on winter evenings; in listening to a wonderful musical clock, which cost a thousand guineas in Europe and played twenty tunes; and in gazing at a panorama of London, which most Philadelphians considered almost as good as visiting the metropolis itself. When she is well advanced in years, she is beguiled by her insatiable curiosity into going to see an elephant, which is kept in a "small ordinary room," in a not very reputable alley. In fact, she is a little frightened, and more than a little ashamed, at finding herself in such a place, until she encounters a friend, Abigail Griffitts, who has come to gratify *her* curiosity under pretence of showing the elephant to her grandchildren; and the two women are so sustained by each other's company that they forget their confusion, and proceed to examine the mammoth together. "It is an innocent, good-natured, ugly Beast," comments Elizabeth Drinker, "which I need not undertake to describe; only to say it is indeed a marvel to most who see it, – one of the kind never having been in this part of the world before. I could not help pitying the poor creature, whom they keep in constant agitation, and often give it rum or brandy to drink. I think they will finish it before long." The presence of an elephant in a small room, like one of the family, seems an uncomfortable arrangement, even if the "innocent beast" were of temperate habits; but an elephant in a state of unseemly "agitation" must have been – at such close quarters – a disagreeable and dangerous companion.

One pastime there is which dates from the days of Eden, which no creed forbids and no civilization for-

swears. Elizabeth Sandwith has not recorded many little events in her diary before Henry Drinker looms upon the scene, though it is only by the inexpressible demureness of her allusions to her lover that we have any insight into the state of her affections. Quaker training does not encourage the easy unfurling of emotions, and Elizabeth's heart, like her soul, was a guarded fortress which no one was invited to inspect. There is a good deal of tea-drinking, however, and sometimes an indiscreet lingering after tea until "unseasonable hours," eleven o'clock or thereabouts. Finally, on the 28th of November, 1760, appears the following entry: "Went to monthly meeting this morning, A. Warner and Sister with me. Declared my intentions of marriage with my Friend H. D. Sarah Sansom and Sarah Morris accompanied us to ye Men's meeting." Four weeks later this formidable ordeal is repeated. She announces in the December monthly meeting that she continues her intentions of marriage with her friend H. D. In January the wedding is celebrated; and then, and then only, H. D. expands into "my dear Henry," and assumes a regular, though never a very prominent, place in the diary.

After this, the entries grow longer, less personal, and full of allusions to public matters. We learn how sharply justice was administered in the Quaker city; for Benjamin Ardey, being convicted of stealing goods out of a shop where he was employed, is whipped for two successive Saturdays, – "once at ye cart's tail, and once at ye post." We learn all about the delights of travelling in those primitive days; for the young wife accompanies her husband on several journeys he is compelled to make to the little townships of the province, and gives us a

lively account of the roads and inns, – of the Manatawny Tavern, for example, and the indignation of the old Dutch landlady on being asked for clean sheets. Such a notion as changing sheets for every fresh traveller has never dawned upon her mind before, and, with the conservative instincts of her class, she takes very unkindly to the suggestion. She is willing to dampen and press the bed linen, since these fastidious guests dislike to see it rampled; but that is the full extent of her complaisance. If people want clean sheets, they had better bring them along.

Most interesting of all, we find in this faithful, accurate, unemotional diary a very clear and graphic picture of Philadelphia on the eve of the Revolution and after the Declaration of Independence, when deepening discontent and the sharp strife of opposing factions had forever destroyed the old placid, prosperous colonial life. Every one knows how stubborn was the opposition offered by the Quakers to the war; how they were hurled from their high estate by the impetuosity of a patriotism which would brook no delay; and how, with the passing away of the Assembly, they lost all vestige of political power. Scant mercy was shown them after their downfall by the triumphant Whigs, and scant justice has been done them since by historians who find it easier to be eloquent than impartial. There appears to have been something peculiarly maddening in the passive resistance of the Friends, and in their absolute inability to share the emotions of the hour. The same quiet antagonism which they had manifested to the Stamp Act, to the threepenny duty on tea, and to all unconstitutional measures on the part of England, they offered in turn to the mandates of

Congress, and to the exactions of the Executive Council. They would not renounce their allegiance to the crown; they would not fight for king or country; they would not pay the new state tax levied for the support of the troops; they would not lift their hands when the tax collector carried off their goods and chattels in default of payment; they would not hide their valuables from the collector's eyes; they would not run away when General Howe's army entered Philadelphia in the autumn of 1777, nor when the American troops took possession the following June. They would not do anything at all, – not even talk; and perhaps silence was their most absolutely irritating characteristic, at a time when other men found pulpit and platform insufficient for the loud-voiced eloquence of strife.

In reading Elizabeth Drinker's journal, we cannot but be struck with the absence of invective, and, for the most part, of comment. Anxiety and irritation are alike powerless to overcome the lifelong habit of restraint. Her husband appears to have been a stubborn and consistent Tory, though the restrictions of his creed compelled him to play an idle part, and to suffer for a lost cause without striking a blow in its behalf. He was one of forty gentlemen, nearly all Friends, who were banished from Philadelphia in the summer of 1777; and his wife, with two young children, was left unprotected, to face the discomforts and dangers of the times. She was more than equal to the task. There is as little evidence of timidity as of rancour in the quiet pages of her diary. She describes the excitement and confusion which the news of General Howe's approach awakened in Philadelphia, and on the 26th of September writes: "Well! here are ye

English in earnest. About two or three thousand came in through Second Street, without opposition or interruption, – no plundering on ye one side or ye other. What a satisfaction would it be to our dear absent friends," – of whom one was her absent husband, – "could they but be informed of it."

From this time, all public events are recorded with admirable brevity and accuracy (Cæsar would have respected Elizabeth Drinker): the battle of Germantown, the difficulty of finding shelter for the wounded soldiers, the bombardment and destruction of the three forts which guarded Franklin's *chevaux de frise* and separated General Howe from the fleet, the alarming scarcity of provisions before the three forts fell. Despite her Tory sympathies and her husband's banishment, Elizabeth sends coffee and wine whey daily to the wounded American prisoners; rightly thinking that the English ran a better chance of being looked after in the hospitals than did her own countrymen. She suffers no molestation save once, when, as she writes, "a soldier came to demand Blankets, which I did not in any wise agree to. Notwithstanding my refusal, he went upstairs and took one, and with good nature begged I would excuse his borrowing it, as it was by General Howe's orders."

Annoyances and alarms were common enough in a town overrun by redcoats, who were not infrequently drunk. Elizabeth, descending one night to her kitchen, found a tipsy sergeant making ardent and irresistible love to her neat maidservant, Ann. On being told to go away, the man grew bellicose, flourished his sword, and used the forcible language of the camp. He had reckoned without his host, however, when he thought to have

matters all to his own liking under that quiet Quaker roof. A middle-aged neighbour, – a Friend, – hearing the tumult, came swiftly to the rescue, collared the rascal, and wrenched the sword out of his hand; whereupon Elizabeth, with delightful sense and caution, carried the carnal weapon into the parlour, and deliberately locked it up in a drawer. This sobered the warrior, and brought him to his senses. To go back to his barracks without his sword would be to court unpleasant consequences. So after trying what some emphasized profanity would do to help him, and finding it did nothing at all, he grew humble, said he had only yielded up his arms "out of pure good nature," and announced his willingness to drink a glass of wine with such peaceable and friendly folk. No liquor was produced in response to this cordial condescension, but he was conducted carefully to the step, the sword returned to him, and the door shut in his face; upon which poor foolish Ann, being refused permission to follow, climbed the back fence in pursuit of her lover, and returned to her duties no more.

Of the brilliant gayety which marked this memorable winter, of the dinners and balls, of the plays at the old Southwark Theatre, of the reckless extravagance and dissipation which filled the lives of the fair Tory dames who danced the merry nights away, there is not the faintest reflection in the pages of this diary. Even the Mischianza – that marvellous combination of ball, banquet, and tournament – is dismissed in a few brief sentences. "Ye scenes of Vanity and Folly," says the home-staying Quaker wife, though still without any rancorous disapprobation of the worldly pleasures in which she has no share. To withstand steadfastly the allurements of life, yet pass no

censure upon those who yield to them, denotes a gentle breadth of character, far removed from the complacent self-esteem of the "unco guid." When a young English officer, whom Elizabeth Drinker is compelled to receive under her roof, gives an evening concert in his rooms, and the quiet house rings for the first time with music and loud voices, her only comment on the entertainment is that it was "carried on with as much soberness and good order as the nature of the thing admitted." And when he invites a dozen friends to dine with him, she merely records that "they made very little noise, and went away timeously." It is a good tonic to read any pages so free from complaints and repining.

The diary bears witness to the sad distress of careless merrymakers when the British army prepared to take the field, to the departure of many prominent Tories with Admiral Howe's fleet, and to the wonderful speed and silence with which Sir Henry Clinton withdrew his forces from Philadelphia. "Last night," writes Elizabeth on the 18th of June, 1778, "there were nine thousand of ye British Troops left in Town, and eleven thousand in ye Jerseys. This morning, when we arose, there was not one Red-Coat to be seen in Town, and ye Encampment in ye Jerseys had vanished."

With the return of Congress a new era of discomfort began for the persecuted Friends, whose houses were always liable to be searched, whose doors were battered down, and whose windows were broken by the vivacious mob; while the repeated seizures of household effects for unpaid war taxes soon left rigid members of the society – bound at any cost to obey the dictates of their uncompromising consciences – without a vestige of furniture

in their pillaged homes. "George Schlosser and a young man with him came to inquire what stores we have," is a characteristic entry in the journal. "Looked into ye middle room and cellar. Behaved complaisant. Their authority, the Populace." And again: "We have taxes at a great rate almost daily coming upon us. Yesterday was seized a walnut Dining Table, five walnut Chairs, and a pair of large End-Irons, as our part of a tax for sending two men out in the Militia." This experience is repeated over and over again, varied occasionally by some livelier demonstrations on the part of the "populace," which had matters all its own way during those wild years of misrule. When word came to Philadelphia that Lord Cornwallis had surrendered, the mob promptly expressed its satisfaction by wrecking the houses of Friends and Tory sympathizers. "We had seventy panes of glass broken," writes Elizabeth calmly, "ye sash lights and two panels of the front Parlour broke in pieces; ye Door cracked and violently burst open, when they threw stones into ye House for some time, but did not enter. Some fared better, some worse. Some Houses, after breaking ye door, they entered, and destroyed the Furniture. Many women and children were frightened into fits, and 't is a mercy no lives were lost."

When peace was restored and the federal government firmly established, these disorders came to an end; a new security reigned in place of the old placid content; and a new prosperity, more buoyant but less solid than that of colonial days, gave to Philadelphia, as to other towns, an air of gayety, and habits of increased extravagance. We hear no more of the men who went with clubs from shop to shop, "obliging ye people to lower their prices," – a

proceeding so manifestly absurd that "Tommy Redman, the Doctor's apprentice, was put in prison for laughing as ye Regulators passed by." We hear no more of houses searched or furniture carted away. Elizabeth Drinker's diary begins to deal with other matters, and we learn to our delight that this sedate Quakeress was passionately fond of reading romances; – those alluring, long-winded, sentimental, impossible romances, dear to our great-grandmothers' hearts. It is true she does not wholly approve of such self-indulgence, and has ever ready some word of excuse for her own weakness; but none the less "The Mysteries of Udolpho" and its sister stories thrill her with delicious emotions of pity and alarm. "I have read a foolish romance called 'The Haunted Priory; or the Fortunes of the House of Rayo,' " she writes on one occasion; "but I have also finished knitting a pair of large cotton stockings, bound a petticoat, and made a batch of gingerbread. This I mention to show that I have not spent the whole day reading." Again she confesses to completing two thick volumes entitled "The Victim of Magical Illusions; or the Mystery of the Revolution of P— L— ," which claimed to be a "magico-political tale, founded on historic fact." "It may seem strange," she muses, "that I should begin the year, reading romances. 'Tis a practice I by no means highly approve, yet I trust I have not sinned, as I read a little of most things."

She does indeed, for we find her after a time dipping into – of all books in the world – Rabelais, and retiring hastily from the experiment. "I expected something very sensible and clever," she says sadly, "but on looking over the volumes I was ashamed I had sent for them." Mary Wollstonecraft's "Vindication of the Rights of Women"

pleases her infinitely better; though she is unwilling to go so far as the impetuous Englishwoman, in whom reasonableness was never a predominant trait. Unrestricted freedom, that curbless wandering through doubtful paths which end in social pitfalls, offered no allurement to the Quaker wife in whom self-restraint had become second nature; but her own intelligence and her practical capacity for affairs made her respect both the attainments and the prerogatives of her sex. In fact, she appears to have had exceedingly clear and definite opinions upon most matters which came within her ken, and she expresses them in her diary without diffidence or hesitation. The idol of the Revolutionary period was Tom Paine; and when we had established our own republic, the enthusiasm we felt for republican France predisposed us still to believe that Paine's turbulent eloquence embodied all wisdom, all justice, and all truth. In Philadelphia the French craze assumed more dangerous and absurd proportions than in any other city of the Union. Her once decorous Quaker streets were ornamented with liberty-poles and flower-strewn altars to freedom, around which men and women, girls and boys, danced the carmagnole, and shrieked wild nonsense about tyrants and the guillotine. The once quiet nights were made hideous with echoes of "*Ça ira*" and the Marseillaise. Citizens, once sober and sensible, wore the *bonnet rouge*, exchanged fraternal embraces, recited mad odes at dinners, and played tricks fantastic enough to plunge the whole hierarchy of heaven into tears, – or laughter. "If angels have any fun in them," says Horace Walpole, "how we must divert them!" Naturally, amid this popular excitation, "The Rights of Man" and "The Age of Reason" were

the best-read books of the day, and people talked about them with that fierce fervour which forbade doubt or denial.

Now Elizabeth Drinker was never fervent. Hers was that critical attitude which unconsciously, but inevitably, weighs, measures, and preserves a finely adjusted mental balance. She read "The Age of Reason," and she read "The Rights of Man," and then she read Addison's "Evidences of the Christian Religion," by way of putting her mind in order, and *then* she sat down and wrote: –

"Those who are capable of much wickedness are, if their minds take a right turn, capable of much good; and we must allow that Tom Paine has the knack of writing, or putting his thoughts and words into method. Were he rightly inclined, he could, I doubt not, say ten times as much in favour of the Christian religion as he has advanced against it. And if Lewis ye 17^{th} were set up as King of France, and a sufficient party in his favour, and Paine highly bribed or flattered, he would write more for a monarchical government than he has ever written on the other side."

Yet orthodoxy alone, unsupported by intellect, had scant charm for this devout Quakeress. She wanted, as she expresses it, thoughts and words put into method. Of a most orthodox and pious little book, which enjoyed the approbation of her contemporaries, she writes as follows: "Read a pamphlet entitled 'Rewards and Punishments; or Satan's Kingdom Aristocratical,' written by John Cox, a Philadelphian, in verse. Not much to the credit of J. C. as a poet, nor to the credit of Philadelphia; tho' the young man may mean well, and might perhaps have done better in prose."

"Pilgrim's Progress," however, she confesses she has read three times, and finds that, "tho' little thought of by some," she likes it better and better with each fresh reading. Lavater she admires as a deep and original thinker, while mistrusting that he has "too good a concert" of his own theories and abilities; and the "Morals" of Confucius she pronounces "a sweet little piece," and finer than most things produced by a more enlightened age.

This is not a bad showing for those easy old days, when the higher education of women had not yet dawned as a remote possibility upon any mind; and when, in truth, the education of men had fallen to a lower level than in earlier colonial times. Philadelphia was sinking into a stagnant mediocrity, her college had been robbed of its charter, and the scholarly ambitions (they were never more than ambitions) of Franklin's time were fading fast away. Even Franklin, while writing admirable prose, had failed to discover any difference between good and bad verse. His own verse is as cheerfully and comprehensively bad as any to be found, and he always maintained that men should practise the art of poetry, only that they might improve their prose. This purely utilitarian view of the poet's office was not conducive to high thinking or fine criticism; and Elizabeth Drinker was doubtless in a very small minority when she objected to "Satan's Kingdom Aristocratical," on the score of its halting measures.

The most striking characteristic of our Quaker diarist is precisely this clear, cold, unbiased judgment, this sanity of a well-ordered mind. What she lacks, what the journal lacks from beginning to end, is some touch of

human and ill-repressed emotion, some word of pleasant folly, some weakness left undisguised and unrepented. The attitude maintained throughout is too judicial, the repose of heart and soul too absolute to be endearing. Here is a significant entry, illustrating as well as any other this nicely balanced nature, which gave to all just what was due, and nothing more: –

"There has been a disorder lately among yo cats. Our poor old Puss, who has been for some time past unwell, died this morning, in ye 13th year of her age. Peter dug a grave two feet deep on ye bank in our garden, under ye stable window, where E. S., Peter and I saw her decently interred. *I had as good a regard for her as was necessary.*"

Was ever affection meted out like this? Was there ever such Quaker-like precision of esteem? For thirteen years that cat had been Elizabeth Drinker's companion, and she had acquired for her just as good a regard as was necessary, and no more. It was not thus Sir Walter spoke, when Hinse of Hinsdale lay dead beneath the windows of Abbotsford, slain by the great staghound, Nimrod. It was not thus that M. Gautier lamented the consumptive Pierrot. It is not thus that the heart mourns, when a little figure, friendly and familiar, sits no longer by our desolate hearth.

IX

French Love-Songs

Quand on est coquette, il faut être sage;
L'oiseau de passage
Qui vole à plein coeur
Ne dort pas en air comme une hirondelle,
Et peut, d'un coup d'aile,
Briser une fleur.
– Alfred de Musset.

The literature of a nation is rooted in national characteristics. Foreign influences may dominate it for a time; but that which is born of the soil is imperishable, and must, by virtue of tenacity, conquer in the end. England, after the Restoration, tried very hard to be French, and the "happy and unreflecting wantonness" of her earlier song was chilled into sobriety by the measured cadences of Gallic verse; yet the painful and perverse effort to adjust herself to strange conditions left her more triumphantly English than before. We are tethered to our kind, and the wisest of all wise limitations is that which holds us well within the sphere of natural and harmonious development.

It is true, however, that nationality betrays itself less in lyrics, and, above all, less in love lyrics, than in any other form of literature. Love is a malady, the common symptoms of which are the same in all patients; and though love-songs – like battle-songs and drinking songs – are seldom legitimate offsprings of experience, they are

efforts to express in words that sweet and transient pain. "*Les âmes bien nées*" – without regard to birthplace – sing clearly of their passion, and seek their "*petit coin de bonheur*" under Southern and Northern skies. The Latin races have, indeed, depths of reserve underlying their apparent frankness, and the Saxons have a genius for self-revelation underlying their apparent reticence; but these traits count for little in the refined duplicity of the love-song.

Garde bien ta belle folie!

has been its burden ever since it was first chanted by minstrel lips.

M. Brunetière frankly admits the inferiority of the French lyric, an inferiority which he attributes to the predominance of social characteristics in the literature, as in the life of France. When poetry is compelled to full a social function, to express social conditions and social truths, to emphasize fundamental principles and balance contrasted forces, the founts of lyrical inspiration are early dried. Individualism is their source, – the sharp, clear striking of the personal note; and the English, says M. Brunetière, excel in this regard. "To Lucasta. Going to the Wares," has no perfect counterpart in the love-songs of other lands.

Even the eager desire of the Frenchman to be always intelligible ("That which is not lucid is not French") militates against the perfection of the lyric. So too does his exquisite and inborn sense of proportion. "Measure," says Mr. Brownell, "is a French passion;" but it is a passion that refuses to lend itself to rapturous sentiment.

Et veut que l'on soit sage avec sobriété

is hardly a maxim to which the genius of the love-song gives willing ear. Rather is she the *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, or the Elfin Lady who rode through the forests of ancient France.

My sire is the nightingale,
That sings, making his wail,
In the wild wood, clear;
The mermaid is mother to me,
That sings in the salt sea,
In the ocean mere.

"What," asks Mr. Brownell hopelessly, "has become of this Celtic strain in the French nature?" – a strain which found vent in the "*poésie courtoise*," playful, amorous, laden with delicate subtleties and fond conceits. This poesie – once the delight of Christendom – echoes still in Petrarch's sonnets and in Shakespeare's madrigals; but it is difficult to link its sweet extravagances with the chiselled verse of later days, and critics forget the past in their careful contemplation of the present. "French poetry," says Mr. Zangwill, "has always leant to the frigid, the academic, the rhetorical, – in a word, to the prosaic. The spirit of Boileau has ruled it from his cold marble urn."

But long before Boileau lay in his urn – or in his cradle – the poets of France, like the poets of Albion, sang with facile grace of love, and dalliance, and the glory of youth and spring. The fact that Boileau ignored and despised their song, and taught his obedient followers to ignore and despise it also, cannot silence those early notes. When he descended frigidly to his grave, Euterpe

tucked up her loosened hair, and sandalled her bare white feet, and girdled her disordered robes into decent folds. Perhaps it was high time for these reforms. Nothing is less seductive in middle age than the careless gayety of youth. But once France was young, and Euterpe a slip of a girl, and no grim shadow of that classic urn rested on the golden days when Aucassin – model of defiant and conquering lovers – followed Nicolette into the deep, mysterious woods.

Jeunesse sur moy a puissance,
Mais Vieillesse fait son effort
De m'avoir en sa gouvernance,

sang Charles d'Orléans, embodying in three lines the whole history of man and song. Youth was lusty and folly riotous when Ronsard's mistress woke in the morning, and found Apollo waiting patiently to fill his quiver with arrows from her eyes or when Jacques Tahureau watched the stars of heaven grow dim before his lady's brightness; or when Vauquelin dela Fresnaye saw Philis sleeping on a bed of lilies, regardless of discomfort, and surrounded by infant Loves.

J'admirois toutes ces beautez
Égalles à mes loyautez,
Quand esprit me dist en l'oreille:
Fol, que fais-tu? Le temps perdu
Souvent est chèrement vendu;
S'on le recouvre, c'est merveille.

Alors, je m'abbaissai tout bas,
Sans bruit je marchai pas à pas,
Et baisai ses lèvres pourprines:
Savourant un tel bien, je dis

Que tel est dans le Paradis
Le plaisir des âmes divines.

With just such sweet absurdities, such pardonable insincerities, the poets of Elizabeth's England fill their amorous verse. George Gascoigne "swims in heaven" if his mistress smiles upon him; John Lyly unhesitatingly asserts that Daphne's voice "tunes all the spheres;" and Lodge exhausts the resources of the vegetable and mineral kingdoms in searching for comparisons by which to set forth the beauties of Rosalind. The philosophy of love is alike on both sides of the Channel, and expressed in much the same terms of soft insistence. *Carpe diem* is, and has always been, the lover's maxim; and the irresistible eloquence of the lyric resolves itself finally into these two words of warning, whether urged by Celt or Saxon. Herrick is well aware of their supreme significance when he sings:

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying:
And this same flower that smiles to-day,
To-morrow will be dying.

Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry;
For having lost but once your prime,
You may forever tarry.

Ronsard, pleading with his mistress, strikes the same relentless note:

Done, si vous me croyez, Mignonne,
Tandis que vostre âge fleuronne
En sa plus vert nouveanté,

Cueillez, cueillez vostre jeunesse;
Comme à cette fleur, la vieillesse
Fera ternir vostre beauté.

May-day comes alike in England and in France. Herrick and Jean Passerat, poets of Devonshire and of Champagne, are equally determined that two fair sluggards, who love their pillows better than the dewy grass, shall rise from bed, and share with them the sparkling rapture of the early dawn. Herrick's verse, laden with the freshness of the Spring, rings imperatively in Corinna's sleepy ears:

Get up, get up, for shame! The blooming Morn
Upon her wings presents the god unshorn.
See how Aurora throws her fair
Fresh-quilted colours through the air.
Get up, sweet Slug-a-bed, and see
The dew bespangling herb and tree.

And then – across the gayety of the song – the deepening note of persuasion strikes a familiar chord:

Come, let us go, while we are in our prime;
And take the harmless folly of the time!
We shall grow old apace, and die
Before we know our liberty.

Passerat is no less insistent. The suitors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seem to have dedicated the chill hours of early morning to their courtship. Nor was the custom purely pastoral and poetic. When Lovelace makes his appointments with Clarissa Harlowe at five A.M., the modern reader – if Richardson has a

modern reader – is wont to think the hour an unpropitious one; but to Herrick and to the Pléiade it would have seemed rational enough.

Laissons le lit et le sommeil
Ceste journée:
Pour nous, l'Aurore au front vermeil
Est desjà née

sings the French poet beneath his lady's window; adding, to overcome her coyness – or her sleepiness – the old dominant argument:

Ce villard, contraire aus amans,
Des aisles porte,
Et en fuyant, nos meilleurs ans
Bien loing emporte.
Quand ridée un jour tu seras,
Mélancholique, tu diras:
J'estoy peu sage,
Qui n'usoy point de la beauté
Que si tost le temps a osté
De mon visage.

No less striking is the similarity between the reproachful couplets in which the singers of England and of France delight in denouncing their unfaithful fair ones, or in confessing with harmonious sighs the transient nature of their own emotions. Inconstancy is the breath of love's nostrils, and the inspiration of love's songs, which enchant us because they express an exquisite sentiment in its brief moment of ascendency. The tell-tale past, the dubious future, are alike discreetly ignored. Love in the drama and in the romance plays rather a heavy part. It is too obtrusively omniscient. It is far too self-assertive.

Yet the average taxpayer, as has been well remarked, is no more capable of a grand passion than of a grand opera. The utmost he can achieve is some fair, fleeting hour, and with the imperative gladness of such an hour the love-song thrills sympathetically. It is not *its* business to

recapture
That firs fine careless rapture.

It does not essay the impossible.

Now the old and nameless French poet who wrote –

Femme, plaisir de demye heure,
Et ennuy qui sans fins demeure,

was perhaps too ungraciously candid. Such things, when said at all, should be said prettily.

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more, –
Men were deceivers ever;
One foot in sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.

Gay voices came bubbling with laughter from the happy days that are dead. Sir John Suckling, whose admirable advice to an over-faithful young suitor has been the most invigorating of tonics to suitors ever since, vaunts with pardonable pride his own singleness of heart:

Out upon it! I have loved
Three whole days together,
And am like to love three more,
If it prove fair weather.

Time shall moult away his wings
Ere he shall discover
In the whole wide world again
Such constant lover.

Sir John Sedley epitomizes the situation in his praises of that jade, Phillis, whose smiles win easy pardon for her perfidy:

She deceiving,
I believing, –
What need lovers wish for more?

And Lovelace, reversing the medal, pleads musically – and not in vain – for the same gracious indulgence:

Why shouldst thou sweare I am forsworn,
Since thine vowed to be?
Lady it is already Morn,
And 't was last night I swore to thee
That fond impossibility.

Mr. Lang is of the opinion that no Gallic verse has equalled in audacity this confession of limitations, this "Apologia pro Vita Sua;" and perhaps its light-heartedness is well out of general reach. But the French lover, like the English, was made of threats and promises alike fruitless of fulfilment, and Phillis had many a fair foreign sister, no whit more worthy of regard. Only, amid the laughter and raillery of a Latin people, there rings ever an undertone of regret, – not passionate and heart-breaking, as in Drayton's bitter cry, –

Since there 's no help, come let us kiss and part,

but vague and subtle, linking itself tenderly to some long-ignored and half-forgotten sentiment, buried deep in the reader's heart.

Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

A little sob breaks the smooth sweetness of Belleau's verse, and Ronsard's beautiful lines to his careless young mistress are heavy with the burden of sighs:

Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir, à la chaadelle,
Assise auprès du feu, devisant et filant,
Direz, chantant mes vers, en vous esmerveillant:
'Ronsard me célébroit du temps que j'estois belle.'

The note deepens as we pass into the more conscious art of later years, but it is always French in its grace and moderation. How endurable is the regret with which de Musset sings of Juana, who loved him for a whole year; how musical his farewell to Suzon, whose briefer passion lasted eight summer days:

Que notre amour, si ta m'oublies,
Suzon, dure encore un moment;
Comme un bouquet de fleurs pâlies;
Cache-le dans ton sein charmant!
Adieu! le bonheur reste au gîte;
Le souvenir part avec moi:
Je l'emporterai, ma petite,
Bien loin, bien vite,
Toujours à toi.

In Murger's familiar verses, so pretty and gay and heartsick, in the finer art of Gautier, in the cloudy lyrics of Verlaine, we catch again and again this murmur of poignant but subdued regret, this sigh for the light love that has so swiftly fled. The delicacy of the sentiment is unmatched in English song. The Saxon can be profoundly sad, and he can – or at least he could – be ringingly and recklessly gay; but the mood which is neither sad nor gay, which is fed by refined emotions, and tranquillized

by time's subduing touch, has been expressed oftener and better in France. Four hundred and fifty years ago François Villon touched this exquisite chord in his "Ballade des Dames du Temps Jadis," and it has vibrated gently ever since. We hear it echoing with melancholy grace in these simple lines of Gérard de Nerval:

Oh sont les amoureuses?
Elles sont au tombeau!
Elles sont plus heureuses,
Dans un séjour plus beau.

Nerval, like Villon, had drunk deep of the bitterness of life, but he never permitted its dregs to pollute the clearness of his song:

Et veut que l'on seit triste *avec sobriété.*

In the opinion of many critics, the lyric was not silenced, only chilled, by the development of the classical spirit in France, and the corresponding conversion of England. Its flute notes were heard now and then amid the decorous couplets that delighted well-bred ears. Waller undertook the reformation of English verse, and accomplished it to his own and his readers' radiant satisfaction; yet Waller's seven-year suit of Lady Dorothy Sidney is the perfection of that poetic lovemaking which does not lead, and is not expected to lead, to anything definite and tangible. Never were more charming tributes laid at the feet of indifferent beauty; never was indifference received with less concern. Sacharissa listened and smiled. The world – the august little world of rank and distinction – listened and smiled with her, knowing the poems were

written as much for its edification as for hers; and Waller, well pleased with the audience, nursed his passion tenderly until it flowered into another delicate blossom of verse. The situation was full of enjoyment while it lasted; and when the seven years were over, Lady Dorothy married Henry, Lord Spencer, who never wrote any poetry at all; while her lover said his last good-bye in the most sparkling and heart-whole letter ever penned by inconstant man. What would the author of "The Girdle," and "Go, Lovely Rose," have thought of Browning's uneasy rapture?

O lyric love, half angel and half bird,
And all a wonder and a wild desire.

He would probably have pointed out the exaggeration of the sentiment, and the corresponding looseness of the lines. He would certainly have agreed with the verdict of M. Sévelinges, had that acute critic uttered it in his day. "It is well," says M. Sévelinges, "that passionate love is rare. Its principal effect is to detach men from all their surroundings, to isolate them, to render them independent of the relations which they have not formed for themselves; and a civilized society composed of lovers would return infallibly to misery and barbarism."

Here is the French point of view, expressed with that lucidity which the nation so highly esteems. Who shall gainsay its correctness? But the Saxon, like the Teuton, is sentimental to his heart's core, and finds some illusions better worth cherishing than truth. It was an Englishman, and one to whom the epithet "cynical" has been applied oftenest, and with least accuracy, who wrote, –

When he was young as you are young,
When he was young, and lutes were strung,
And love-lamps in the casement hung.

X

The Spinster

The most ordinarie cause of a single life is liberty, especially in certain self-pleasing and humorous minds, which are so sensible of every restriction, as they wil goe neere to thinks their girdles and garters to be bonds and shakles. – BACON.

In the Zend-Avesta, as translated by Anquetil-Duperron, there is a discouraging sentence passed upon voluntary spinsterhood: "The damsel who, having reached the age of eighteen, shall refuse to marry, must remain in Hell until the earth is shattered."

This assurance is interesting, less because of its provision for the spinster's future than because it takes into consideration the possibility of her refusing to marry; – a possibility which slipped out of men's minds from the time of Zoroaster until our present day. A vast deal has been written about marriage in the interval; but it all bears the imprint of the masculine intellect, reasoning from the masculine point of view, for the benefit of masculinity, and ignoring in the most natural manner the woman's side of life. The trend of argument is mainly in one direction. While a few cynics gibe at love and conjugal felicity, the mass of poets and philosophers unite in extolling wedlock. Some praise its pleasures, others its duties, and others again merely point out with Euripides that, as children cannot be bought with gold or silver,

there is no way of acquiring these coveted possessions save by the help of women. Now and then a rare word of sympathy is flung to the wife, as in those touching lines of Sophocles upon the young girls sold in their "gleeful maidenhood" to sad or shameful marriage-beds. But the important thing to be achieved is the welfare and happiness of men. The welfare and happiness of women are supposed – not without reason – to follow as a necessary sequence; but this is a point which excites no very deep concern.

Catholic Christendom throughout the Middle Ages, and long afterwards, offered one practical solution to the problem of unmated and unprotected womanhood, – the convent. The girl robbed of all hope of marriage by bitter stress of war or poverty, the girl who feared too deeply the turmoil and violence of the world, found shelter in the convent. Within its walls she was reasonably safe, and her vows lent dignity to her maidenhood. Bride of the Church, she did not rank as a spinster, and her position had the advantage of being accurately defined; she was part of a recognized social and ecclesiastical system. No one feels this more solidly than does a nun to-day, and no one looks with more contempt upon unmarried women in the world. In her eyes there are but two vocations, – wifehood and consecrated virginity. She perceives that the wife and the religious are transmitters of the world's traditions; while the spinster is an anomaly, with no inherited background to give repute and distinction to her rôle.

This point of view is the basis of much criticism, and has afforded scope for the ridicule of the satirist, and for the outpourings of the sentimentalist. A great many

brutal jests have been flung at the old maid, and floods of sickly sentiment have been wasted on her behalf. She has been laughed at frankly as one rejected by men, and she has been wept over as a wasted force, withering patiently under the blight of this rejection. "Envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness" have been ascribed to her on one side, and a host of low-spirited and treacly virtues, on the other. The spinster of comedy is a familiar figure. A perfectly simple and ingenuous example is the maiden aunt in "Pickwick," Miss Rachel Wardle, whom Mr. Tupman loves, and with whom Mr. Jingle elopes. She is spiteful and foolish, envious of youth and easy to dupe. She is utterly ridiculous, and a fair mark for laughter. She is pinched, and withered, and hopelessly removed from all charm of womanhood; and – it may be mentioned parenthetically – she is fifty years old. We have her brother's word for it.

There is nothing in this straightforward caricature that could, or that should, wound anybody's sensibilities. The fun is of a robust order; the ridicule has no subtlety and no sting. But the old maid of the sentimentalists, a creature stricken at heart, though maddeningly serene and impossibly unselfish, is every bit as remote from reality, and far less cheerful to contemplate. What can be more offensive than the tearful plea for consideration put forward by her apologists, who, after all, tolerate her only because, having no career of her own, she is expected to efface herself in the interests of other people. "The peculiar womanly virtues," says a recent writer upon this fruitful theme, "the power of self-sacrifice, warm sympathies, compassion, patient endurance, represent an untold amount of suffering on the part of the weaker

sex in past ages. It is to the world's advantage that the fruit of such suffering be not lost."

Here is a sparkling view of life; here is a joyous standpoint of observation. There is generosity enough in the world to win for the dejected, the wistful, the pathetic woman a fair share of commiseration; provided always that she does not oppose her own interests to the interests of those around her. But what if she honestly prefers her own interests, – a not uncommon attitude of mind? What if patient endurance be the very last virtue to which she can lay claim? What if she is not in the least wistful, and never casts longing looks at her sister-in-law's babies, nor strains them passionately to her heart, nor deems it a privilege to nurse her nephews through whooping-cough and measles, nor offers herself in any fashion as a holocaust upon other people's domestic altars? What if, holding her life in her two hands, and knowing it to be her only real possession, she disposes of it in the way she feels will give her most content, swimming smoothly in the stream of her own nature, and clearly aware that happiness lies in the development of her individual tastes and acquirements? Such a woman may, as Mr. Brownell says, exhibit transparently "her native and elemental inconsistencies;" but she calls for no commiseration, and perhaps adds a trifle to the harmonious gayety of earth.

That she should be censured for laying claim to what is truly hers seems unkind and irrational, – a tyranny of opinion. Marriage is a delightful thing; but it is not, and never can be, a duty; nor is it as a duty that men and women have hitherto zealously practised it. The outcry against celibacy as a "great social disease" is louder

than the situation warrants. It is the echo of an older protest against the deferring of the inevitable wedding-day; against the perverse "boggling at every object," which Burton found so exasperating a trait in youth, and which La Bruyère calmly and conclusively condemns. "There is," says the French moralist, "a time when even the richest women ought to marry. They cannot allow their youthful chances to escape them, without the risk of a long repentance. The importance of their reputed wealth seems to diminish with their beauty. A young woman, on the contrary, has everything in her favour; and if, added to youth, she possesses other advantages, she is so much the more desirable."

This is the simplest possible exposition of the masculine point of view. It is plain that nothing is farther from La Bruyère's mind than the possibility of a lifelong spinsterhood for even the most procrastinating heiress. He merely points out that it would be more reasonable in her to permit a husband to enjoy her youth and her wealth simultaneously. The modern moralist argues with less suavity that the rich woman who remains unmarried because she relishes the wide and joyous activity fostered by her independence is a transgressor against social laws. She sins through dire selfishness, and her punishment is the loss of all that gives dignity and importance to her life. Only a few months ago a strenuous advocate of matrimony – as if matrimony had need of advocates – pointed out judicially in "Harper's Magazine" that the childless woman has nothing to show for all the strength and skill she has put into the business of living. She may be intelligent, stimulating, and serene. She may have seen much of the world, and have taken its lessons

to heart. She may have filled her days with useful and agreeable occupations. Nevertheless, he considers her existence "in the long run, a bootless sort of errand;" doubting whether she has acquired anything that can make life more interesting to her at thirty-five, at forty-five, at seventy. "And so much the worse for her."

This is assuming that there *are* no interests outside of marriage; no emotions, ambitions, nor obligations unconnected with the rearing of children. We are invited to believe that the great world, filled to its brim with pleasures and pains, duties, diversions, and responsibilities, cannot keep a woman going – even to thirty-five – without the incentive of maternity. Accustomed as we are to the expansive utterances of conjugal felicity, this seems a trifle overbearing. Charles Lamb thought it hard to be asked by a newly wedded lady how – being a bachelor – he could assume to know anything about the breeding of oysters. Today the expressed doubt is how – being spinsters or bachelors – we can assume to know anything about the serious significance of life.

It is not the rich and presumably self-indulgent woman alone who is admonished to mend her ways and marry. The sentence extends to the working classes, who are held to be much in fault. Even the factory girl, toiling for her daily bread, has been made the subject of censure as unjust as it is severe. What if she does covet the few poor luxuries, – the neat shoes and pretty frock which represent her share of æsthetic development? What if she does enjoy her independence, and the power to spend as she pleases the money for which she works so hard? These things are her inalienable rights. To limit them is tyranny. To denounce them is injustice. We may

sincerely believe that she would be better and happier if she married; and that the bringing up of children on the precarious earnings of a working-man would be a more legitimate field for her intelligence and industry. But it is her privilege to decide this point for herself; and no one is warranted in questioning her decision. She does not owe matrimony to the world.

There is still another class of women whose spinsterhood is hardly a matter of choice, yet whose independence has aroused especial criticism and denunciation. A few years ago there appeared in "Macmillan's Magazine" a well-written article on the educated, unmarried, and self-supporting women, who, in London alone, fill countless clerical, official, and academic positions. It was pointed out that these toilers, debarred by poverty from agreeable social conditions, lead lives of cheerful and honourable frugality, preserving their self-respect, seeking help and commiseration from none, enjoying their scanty pleasures with intelligence, and doing their share of work with eager and anxious precision. Surely if any creatures on God's earth merit some esteem, these spinsters may be held in deference. Yet the writer of the article unhesitatingly, though not unkindly, summed up the case against them. No woman with a sensitive conscience, he avowed, can be happy on such terms. "She more than suspects she is in danger of serious moral deterioration.... She is aware that her mode of life is essentially selfish, and therefore stands condemned."

In the name of Heaven, why? Would her mode of life be less selfish if she asked a support from a married brother, or a wealthy aunt? Is it necessary to her moral well-being that she should pass her days in polite

servitude? Apparently it is; for hardly had the "Macmillan" article appeared, when a more strenuous critic in the "Spectator" took its writer severely to task, not for his censorship, but for his leniency. The "Spectator" declared in round terms that the woman who devotes herself to the difficult problem of her own support "lives a more or less unnatural life of self-dependence; – the degree of the unnaturalness depending on the degree of her self-dependence, and the completeness of the disappearance of that religious devoutness which prevents loneliness from degenerating into self-dependence."

Shades of Addison and Steele pardon this cumbrous sentence! That self-dependence might degenerate into loneliness we can understand; but how or why should loneliness degenerate into self dependence, and what has either loneliness or self-dependence to do with the "disappearance of religious devoutness"? Is religion also a perquisite of family life? May we not be devout in solitude? "Be able to be alone," counsels Sir Thomas Browne, whose piety was of a most satisfying order. It is not profane to plan or to advance an individual career. We do not insult Providence by endeavouring to provide for ourselves. And if the restlessness of modern life impels women of independent fortune to enter congenial fields of work, the freedom to do this thing is their birthright and prerogative. We can no more sweep back the rising tide of interests and ambitions than we can sweep back the waves of the Atlantic. A hundred years ago, marriage was for an intelligent woman a necessary entrance into life, a legitimate method of carrying out her ideas and her aims. To-day she tries to carry them out, whether she be married or not. Perhaps some

awkwardness of self-assertion disfigures that "polished moderation" which is her highest grace; but the frank resoluteness of her attitude is more agreeable to contemplate than sad passivity and endurance. Mr. John Stuart Mill said that a woman's inheritance of "subjection" – he never minced words – induced, on the one hand, a capacity for self-sacrifice, and, on the other, a habit of pusillanimity. Both characteristics have been modified by changing circumstances. But with more courage and less self-immolation has come a happier outlook upon life, and an energy which is not always misplaced. Mariana no longer waits tearfully in the Moated Grange. She leaves it as quickly as possible for some more healthful habitation, and a more engaging pursuit.

There is one English author who has defended with delicacy that sagacious self-respect which, even in his time, preserved a woman now and then from the blunder of an unequal and unbecoming marriage. De Quincey, extolling the art of letter-writing, pays this curious bit of homage to his most valued correspondents:

"Three out of four letters in the mailbag will be written by that class of women who have the most leisure, and the most interest in a correspondence by the post; and who combine more intelligence, cultivation, and thoughtfulness than any other class in Europe. They are the unmarried women over twenty-five, who, from mere dignity of character, have renounced all prospects of conjugal and parental life, rather than descend into habits unsuitable to their birth. Women capable of such sacrifices, and marked by such strength of mind, may be expected to think with deep feeling, and to express

themselves (unless when they have been too much biased by bookish connections) with natural grace."

This is something very different from the "All for Love, and the World well lost," flaunted by novelists and poets; very different from the well-worn "Quand on n'a pas ce qu'on aime, il faut aimer ce qu'on a," which has married generations of women. But in the philosophy of life, the power to estimate and to balance scores heavily for success. It is not an easy thing to be happy. It takes all the brains, and all the soul, and all the goodness we possess. We may fail of our happiness, strive we ever so bravely; but we are less likely to fail if we measure with judgment our chances and our capabilities. To glorify spinsterhood is as ridiculous as to decry it. Intelligent women marry or remain single, because in married or in single life they see their way more clearly to content. They do not, in either case, quarrel with fate which has modelled them for, and fitted them into, one groove rather than another; but follow, consciously or unconsciously, the noble maxim of Marcus Aurelius: "Love that only which the gods send thee, and which is spun with the thread of thy destiny."

XI

The Tourist

See Thrale's grey widow with a satchel roam,
And bring in pomp laborious nothings home.
– The Baviad.

"Potter hates Potter, and Poet hates Poet," – so runs the wisdom of the ancients, – but tourist hates tourist with a cordial Christian animosity that casts all Pagan prejudices in the shade. At home we tolerate – sometimes we even love – our fellow creatures. We can see large masses of them in church and theatre, we can be jostled by them in streets, and be kept waiting by them in shops, and be inconvenienced by them at almost every turn, without rancorous annoyance or ill will. But abroad it is our habit to regard all other travellers in the light of personal and unpardonable grievances. They are intruders into our chosen realms of pleasure, they jar upon our sensibilities, they lessen our meagre share of comforts, they are everywhere in our way, they are always an unnecessary feature in the landscape.

I love not man the less, but nature more,

wrote Byron, when sore beset; but the remark cannot be said to bear the stamp of truth. Nine tenths of the poet's love for nature was irritation at the boundless injustice and the sterling stupidity of man. He would never have expressed so much general benevolence had

Europe in his time been the tourist-trodden platform it is to-day.

We might, were we disposed to be reasonable, bear in mind the humiliating fact that we too are aliens, out of harmony with our surroundings, and marring, as far as in us lies, the charm of ancient street or the still mountain side. Few of us, however, are so candid as Mr. Henry James, who, while detesting his fellow travellers, frankly admits his own inherent undesirability. "We complain," he says, "of a hackneyed and cockneyized Europe; but wherever, in desperate search of the untrodden, we carry our much-labelled luggage, our bad French, our demand for a sitz-bath and pale ale, we rub off the bloom of local colour, and establish a precedent for unlimited intrusion."

This is generous, and it is not a common point of view. "Americans do roam so," I heard an Englishwoman remark discontentedly in Cook's Paris office, where she was waiting with manifest impatience while the clerk made up tickets for a party of trans-Atlantic kindred. It never seemed to occur to her that she was not upon her own native heath. The habit of classifying our distastes proves how strong is our general sense of injury. We dislike English tourists more than French, or French more than English, or Americans more than either, or Germans most of all, – the last a common verdict. There is a power of universal mastery about the travelling Teuton which affronts our feebler souls. We cannot cope with him; we stand defeated at every turn by his resistless determination to secure the best. The windows of the railway carriages, the little sunny tables in the hotel dining-rooms, the back seats – commanding the

view – of the Swiss *funiculaires*; – all these strong positions he occupies at once with the strategical genius of a great military nation. No weak concern for other people's comfort mars the simple straightforwardness of his plans, nor interferes with their prompt and masterly execution. Amid the confusion and misery of French and Italian railway stations, he plays a conqueror's part, commanding the services of the porters, and marching off triumphantly with his innumerable pieces of hand luggage, while his fellow tourists clamour helplessly for aid. "The Germans are a rude, unmannered race, but active and expert where their personal advantages are concerned," wrote the observant Froissart many years ago. He could say neither more nor less were he travelling over the Continent to-day.

Granted that the scurrying crowds who infest Italy every spring, and Switzerland every summer, are seldom "children of light;" that their motives in coming are, for the most part, unintelligible, and their behaviour the reverse of urbane; – even then there seems to be no real cause for the demoralization that follows in their wake, for the sudden and bitter change that comes over a land when once the stranger claims it as his own. It is the cordial effort made to meet the tourist halfway, to minister to his supposed wants, and to profit by his supposed wealth, that desolates the loveliest cities in the world, that flouts the face of nature, and rasps our most tender sensibilities. Venice turned into a grand bazaar, Vaucluse packed with stalls for the sale of every object which ought never to be found there, the Falls of the Rhine lit up by electricity, like the transformation scene of a ballet; – is it our misfortune or our fault that these

things may be directly traceable to us? Do we *like* to see a trolley-car bumping its way to Chillon, or to find the castle entrance stocked with silver spoons, and wooden bears, and miniature Swiss chilets? Shall I confess that I watched a youthful countrywoman of my own carrying delightedly away – as an appropriate souvenir of the spot – a group consisting of Mother bear sitting up languidly in bed, Nurse bear wrapping Infant bear in swaddling-cloths, and Doctor bear holding a labelled bottle of medicine? There seemed a certain incongruity about the purchase, and a certain lack of sensibility in the purchaser. Chillon is mot without sombre associations, nor poetic life; and if Byron's "Prisoner" no longer wrings our hearts, still youth is youth, – or, at least, it used to be, – and the

> *seven columns, massy and grey,*

were at one time part of its inheritance. Is it better, I wonder, to begin life with a few illusions, a little glow, a pardonable capacity for enthusiasm, or to be so healthily free from every breath of sentiment as to be capable – at eighteen – of buying comic bears within the melancholy portals of Chillon.

Travelling, like novel-writing, is but a modern form of activity; and tourists, like novelists, are increasing at so fearful a rate of speed that foreign countries and library shelves bid fair to be equally overrun. There *was* a time when good men looked askance both upon the page of fable, and upon those far countries where reality was stranger than romance. "I was once in Italy myself," confesses the pious Roger Ascham; "but I thank God my

abode there was but nine days." Nine days seem a scant allowance for Italy. Even the business-like traveller who now scampers "*more Americano*" over Europe is wont to deal more generously with this, its fairest land. But in Roger Ascham's time nine days would hardly have permitted a glimpse at the wonders from which he so swiftly and fearfully withdrew.

Now and then, as years went by, men with a genuine love of roving and adventure wandered far afield, unbaffled by difficulties, and unscandalized by foreign creeds and customs. James Howell, that most delightful of gossips and chroniclers, has so much to say in praise of "the sweetness and advantage of travel," that even now his letters – nearly three hundred years old – stir in our hearts the wayfarer's restless longing. After being "toss'd from shore to shore for thirty-odd months," he can still write stoutly: "And tho' these frequent removes and tumblings under climes of differing temper were not without some danger, yet the delight which accompany'd them was far greater; and it is impossible for any man to conceive the true pleasure of peregrination, but he who actually enjoys and puts it into practice." Moreover, he is well assured that travel is "a profitable school, a running academy, and nothing conduceth more to the building up and perfecting of a man. They that traverse the world up and down have the clearest understanding; being faithful eye-witnesses of those things which others receive but in trust, whereunto they must yield an intuitive consent, and a kind of implicit faith."

In one respect, however, Howell was a true son of his day, of the day when Prelacy and Puritanism alternately afflicted England. For foreign cities and foreign citi-

zens he had a keen and intelligent appreciation; nothing daunted his purpose, nor escaped his observation; but he drew the line consistently at the charms of nature. The "high and hideous Alps" were as abhorrent to his soul as they were, a century later, to Horace Walpole's. It was the gradual – I had almost said the regrettable – discovery of beauty in these "uncouth, huge, monstrous excrescences" which gave a new and powerful impetus to travel. Here at least were innocent objects of pilgrimage, wonders uncontaminated by the evils which were vaguely supposed to lurk in the hearts of Paris and of Rome. It was many, many years after Roger Ascham's praiseworthy flight from Italy that we find Patty More, sister to the ever-virtuous Hannah, writing apprehensively to a friend:

"What is to become of us? All the world, as it seems, flying off to France, that land of deep corruption and wickedness, made hotter in sin by this long and dreadful Revolution. *The very curates in our neighbourhood have been.* I fear a deterioration in the English character is taking place. The Ambassador's lady in Paris could not introduce the English ladies till they had covered up their bodies."

This sounds rather as though England were corrupting France. Perhaps, notwithstanding the truly reprehensible conduct of the curates, – for whom no excuse can be made, – the exodus was not so universal as the agitated Mrs. Patty seemed to think. There were still plenty of stay-at-homes, lapped in rural virtues, and safe from contamination; – like the squire who told Jane Austen's father that he and his wife had been quarrelling the night before as to whether Paris were in France, or

France in Paris. The "Roman Priest Conversion Branch Tract Society" gave to bucolic Britain all the Continental details it required.

But when the "hideous Alps" became the "matchless heights," the "palaces of Nature," when poets had sung their praises lustily, and it had dawned upon the minds of unpoetic men that they were not merely obstacles to be crossed, but objects to be looked at and admired; – *then* were gathered slowly the advance guards of that mighty army of sightseers which sweeps over Europe today. "Switzerland," writes Mr. James gloomily, "has become a show country. I think so more and more every time I come here. Its use in the world is to reassure persons of a benevolent imagination who wish the majority of mankind had only a little more elevating amusement. Here is amusement for a thousand years, and as elevating certainly as mountains five miles high can make it. I expect to live to see the summit of Mount Rosa heated by steam-tubes, and adorned with a hotel setting three dinners a day."

The last words carry a world of weight. They are the key-note of the situation. Tourists in these years of grace need a vast deal of food and drink to keep their enthusiasm warm. James Howell lived contentedly upon bread and grapes for three long months in Spain. Byron wrote mockingly from Lisbon: "Comfort must not be expected by folks that go a-pleasuring;" and no one ever bore manifold discomforts with more endurance and gayety than he did. But now that the "grand tour" – once the experience of a lifetime – has become a succession of little tours, undertaken every year or two, things are made easy for slackened sinews and impaired digestions. The

average traveller concentrates his attention sternly upon the slowness of the Italian trains, the shortness of the Swiss beds, the surliness of the German officials, the dirt of the French inns, the debatableness of the Spanish butter, the universal and world-embracing badness of the tea. These things form the staple topics of discussion among men and women who exchange confidences at the table d'hôte, and they lend a somewhat depressing tone to the conversation, which is not greatly enlivened by a few side remarks connecting the drinking water with the germs of typhoid fever. It is possible that the talkers have enjoyed some exhilarating experiences, some agreeable sensations, which they hesitate – mistakenly – to reveal; but they wax eloquent on the subject of cost. "The continual attention to pecuniary disbursements detracts terribly from the pleasure of all travelling schemes," wrote Shelley in a moment of dejection; and the sentiment, couched in less Johnsonian English, is monotonously familiar to-day. Paying for things is a great trouble and a great expense; and the tourist's uneasy apprehension that he is being overcharged turns this ordinary process – which is not wholly unknown at home – into a bitter grievance. To hear him expatiate upon the subject, one might imagine that his fellow creatures had heretofore supplied all his wants for love.

Great Britain had sent her restless children out to see the world for many years before faraway America joined in the sport, while the overwhelming increase of German travellers dates only from the Franco-Prussian War. Now the three armies of occupation march and countermarch over the Continent, very much in one another's way, and deeply resentful of one another's intrusion. "The English"

– again I venture to quote Froissart – "are affable to no other nation than their own." The Americans – so other Americans piteously lament – are noisy, self-assertive, and contemptuous. The fault of the Germans, as Canning said of the Dutch, –

Is giving too little and asking too much.

All these unlovely characteristics are stimulated and kept well to the fore by travel. It is only in our fellow tourists that we can recognize their enormity. When Mr. Arnold said that Shakespeare and Virgil would have found the Pilgrim Fathers "intolerable company," he was probably thinking of poets and pietists shut up together in fair weather and in foul, while the little Mayflower pitched its slow way across the "estranging sea."

It requires a good deal of courage to quote Lord Chesterfield seriously in these years of grace. His reasonableness is out of favour with moralists, and sentimentalists, and earnest thinkers generally. But we might find it helpful now and then, were we not too wrapped in self-esteem to be so easily helped. "Good breeding," he says thoughtfully, "is a combination of much sense, some good nature, and a little self-denial for the sake of others, with a view to obtain the same indulgence from them." Here is a "Tourist's Guide," – the briefest ever penned. We cannot learn to love other tourists, – the laws of nature forbid it, – but, meditating soberly on the impossibility of their loving us, we may reach some common platform of tolerance, some common exchange of recognition and amenity.

XII

The Headsman

Et cependant, toute grandeur, toute puissance, toute subordination repose sur l'exécuteur: il est l'horreur et le lien de l'association humaine. Otez du monde cet agent incompréhensible; dans l'instant même l'ordre fait place au chaos, les trônes s'abîment, et la société disparait. – Joseph de Maistre

What a sombre and striking figure in the deeply coloured background of history is the headsman, that passive agent of strange tyrannies, that masked executor of laws which were often but the expression of man's violence! He stands aloof from the brilliant web of life, yet, turn where we will, his shadow falls across the scene. In the little walled towns of mediæval Europe, in the splendid cities, in the broad lands held by feudal lord or stately monastery, wherever the struggle for freedom and power was sharpest and sternest, the headsman played his part. An unreasoning and richly imaginative fear wrapped him in a mantle of romance, as deeply stained as the scarlet cloak which was his badge of office. Banished from the cheerful society of men (de Maistre tells us that if other houses surrounded his abode, they were deserted, and left to crumble and decay), he enjoyed privileges that compensated him for his isolation. His tithes were exacted as ruthlessly as were those of prince or baron; and if his wife chattered little on summer days with friendly gossips, she was sought in secret after nightfall

for hideous amulets that blessed – or cursed – the wearer. From father to son, from son to grandson, the right was handed down; and the young boy was taught to lift and swing the heavy sword, that his hand might be as sure as his eye, his muscles as hard as his heart.

Much of life's brilliant panorama was seen from the elevation of the scaffold in the days when men had no chance nor leisure to die lingeringly in their beds. They fell fighting, or by the assassin's hand, or by the help of what was then termed law; and the headsman, standing ever ready for his rôle, beheld human nature in its worst and noblest aspects, in moments of stern endurance and supreme emotion, of heroic ecstasy and blank despair. Had he a turn for the marvellous, it was gratified. He saw Saint Denis arise and carry his severed head from Montmartre to the site of the church which bears his name to-day. He saw Saint Felix and Saint Alban repeat the miracle. He heard Lucretia of Ancona pronounce the sacred name three times after decapitation. Ordericus Vitalis, that most engaging of historians, tells us the story of the fair Lucretia; and also of the Count de Galles, who asked upon the scaffold for time in which to say his *Pater Noster*. When he reached the words, *Et ne nos inducas in tentationem*, the headsman – all unworthy of his office – grew impatient, and brought down his shining sword. The Count's head rolled on the ground, but from his open lips came with terrible distinctness the final supplication, *Sed libera nos a malo*.

These were not trivial experiences. What a tale to tell o' nights was that of Théodoric Schawembourg, whose headless trunk arose and walked thirty paces from the block! Auberive, who has preserved this famous legend,

embroiders it with so many fantastic details that the salient point of the narrative is well-nigh lost; but the dead and forgotten headsman beheld the deed in all its crude simplicity. Had he, on the other hand, a taste for experimental science, it was given him to watch the surgeons of Prague, who in 1679 replaced a severed head upon a young criminal's shoulders, and kept the lad alive for half an hour. Panurge, it will be remembered, was permanently successful in a similar operation; but Panurge was a man of genius. We should hardly expect to find his like among the doctors of Prague.

Strange and unreasonable laws guaranteed to the headsman his full share of emoluments. He was well paid for his work, and never suffered from a dull season. From the towns he received poultry and fodder, from the monasteries, fish and game. The Abbaye de Saint-Germain gave him every year a pig's head; the Abbaye de Saint-Martin five loaves of bread and five bottles of wine. Cakes were baked for him on the eve of Epiphany. From each leper in the community he exacted – Heaven knows why! – a tax at Christmas-time. *Les filles de joie* were his vassals, and paid him tribute. He had the power to save from death any woman on her way to the scaffold, provided he were able and willing to marry her. He was the first official summoned to the body of a suicide; and standing on the dead man's breast, he claimed as his own everything he could touch with the point of his long sword. He might, if he chose, arrest the little pigs that strayed in freedom through the streets of Paris, – like the happy Plantagenet pigs of London, – and carry them as prisoners to the Hôtel Dieu. Here, unless it could be shown that they belonged to the monks of Saint An-

thony, and so, for the sake of the good pig that loved the blessed hermit, were free from molestation, their captor demanded their heads, or a fine of five sous for every ransomed innocent. It was his privilege to snatch in the market-place as much corn as he could carry away in his hands, and the peasants thus freely robbed submitted without a murmur, crossing themselves with fervour as he passed. The representative of law and order was not unlike a licensed libertine in the easy day of old.

The element of picturesqueness entered into this life, sombre traditions enriched it, terror steeped it in gloom, the power for which it stood lent to it dignity and weight. In Spain the headsman wore a distinctive dress, and his house was painted a deep and ominous red. In France the ancient title "*Exécuteur de la haute justice*" had a full-blown majesty of sound. In Germany superstition grew like a fungus beneath the scaffold's shade, until even the sword was believed to be a sentient thing with strange powers of its own. Who can forget the story of the child Annerl, whose mother took her to the headsman's house, whereupon the great weapon stirred uneasily in its cupboard, thirsting for her blood. Then the headsman besought the mother to allow him to cut the little girl very lightly, that the sword might be appeased; but she shudderingly refused, and Annerl, abandoned to her destiny, was led thirty years later to the block. Executions at night were long in favour, and by the flare of torches the scaffold stood revealed to a great and gaping crowd. For centuries *la place de Grève* was the theatre for this ghastly drama, until every foot of the soil was saturated with blood. Only in 1633 were these torchlight

decapitations forbidden throughout France. They had grown too turbulently entertaining.

The headsman's office was hereditary, and if there were no sons, a son-in-law succeeded to the post. Henri Sanson, the last of his dread name, claimed that he was of good blood, and that the far-off ancestor who handed down his sword to nine generations had been betrayed by love to this dark destiny. He had married a headsman's daughter, and could not escape the terrible dowry she brought him. It is not possible to attach much weight to the Sanson memoirs, – they are so plainly apocryphal; but we know that the family plied its craft for nearly two hundred years, and that one woman of the race bore seven sons, who all became executioners. In 1726 Charles Sanson died, leaving a little boy, Jean Baptiste, only seven years old. Upon him devolved his father's office; but, in view of his tender infancy, an assistant was appointed to do the work until he came of age. It was required, however, that the child should stand upon the scaffold at every execution, sanctioning it with his presence.

The pride of the headsman lay in his dexterity. The sword was heavy, the stroke was sure. Capeluche, who during the furious struggle between the Armagnacs and the Burgundians severed many a noble head, was a true enthusiast, practising his art *con amore*, and with incredible delicacy and skill. When the fortunes of war brought him in turn upon the scaffold, he proved no craven; but took a lively and intelligent interest in his own decapitation. His last moments were spent in giving a practical lesson to the executioner; showing him where

to stand, where to place the block, and how best to handle his weapon.

The vast audience that assembled so often to witness a drama never staled by repetition was wont to be exceedingly critical. Bungling work drew down upon the headsman the execrations of the mob, and not infrequently placed his own life in danger. De Thou's head fell only at the eleventh stroke, the Duke of Monmouth was mangled piteously, and in both these instances the fury of the mob rose to murder point. It was ostensibly to save such sufferings and such scenes that the guillotine was adopted in France; but for the guillotine it is impossible to cherish any sentiment save abhorrence. Vile, vulgar, and brutalizing, its only merit was the hideous speed with which it did its work; a speed which the despots of the Terror never found fast enough. In October, 1792, twenty-one Girondists were beheaded in thirty-one minutes; but as practice made perfect, these figures were soon outdistanced. The highest record reached was sixty-two decapitations in forty-five minutes, which sounds like the work of the shambles.

Charles Henri Sanson, the presiding genius of the guillotine, has been lifted to notoriety by the torrents of blood he shed; but his is a contemptible figure, without any of the dark distinction that marked his predecessors. His pages of the family memoirs are probably mendacious, and certainly, as M. Loye pathetically laments, "insipid." He poses as a physiologist, and tells strange tales of the condemned who long survived beheading, as though sixty-two executions in forty-five minutes left leisure for the study of such phenomena. He also affects the tone of a philanthropist, commiserates the king who died by

his hands, and is careful to assure us that it was an assistant named Legros who, holding up the severed head of Charlotte Corday, struck the fair cheek which blushed beneath the blow. We are even asked to believe that he, Sanson, whispered to Marie Antoinette as she descended from the cart, "Have courage, Madame!" – counsel of which that daughter of the Cæsars stood in little need.

The contrast is sharp between this business-like butchery, where the condemned were begrudged the time it took to die, and the earlier executions, so full of dignity and composure. The vilest criminals felt intuitively that the fulness of their atonement consecrated those last sad moments, and behaved often with unexpected propriety and grace. Mme. de Brinvilliers was a full half hour upon the scaffold. The headsman prepared her for death, untying her cap-strings, cutting off her hair, baring her shoulders, and binding her hands. She was composed without bravado, contrite without sanctimoniousness. "I doubt," wrote her confessor, the Abbé Piron, "whether in all her life she had ever been so patient under the hands of her maid." Some natural scorn she expressed at sight of the crowd straining with curiosity to see her die: "Un beau spectacle, Mesdames et Messieurs!" – but this was all. The executioner swept off her head with one swift stroke; then, hastily opening a flask, took a deep draught of wine. "That was a good blow," he said to the Abbé. "At these times I always recommend myself to God, and He has never failed me. This lady has been on my mind for a week past. I will have six Masses said for her soul." Surely such a headsman ennobled in some degree the direful post he bore.

If a murderess, inconceivably callous and cruel, could die with dignity, what of the countless scenes where innocence was sacrificed to ambition, and where the best and noblest blood of Europe was shed upon the block? What of the death of Conradin on a Neapolitan scaffold? In the thirteenth century, boys grew quickly into manhood, and Conradin was seventeen. He had embarked early upon that desperate game, of which the prize was a throne, and the forfeit, life. He had missed his throw, and earned his penalty. But he was the grandson of an emperor, the heir of an imperial crown, and the last of a proud race. There was a pathetic boyishness in the sudden defiance with which he hurled his glove into the throng, and in the low murmur of his mother's name. The headsman had a bitter part to play that day, for Conradin's death is one of the world's tragedies; but there are other scaffolds upon which we still glance back with a pity fresh enough for pain. When Count Egmont and Admiral Horn were beheaded in the great square of Brussels, the executioner wisely hid beneath the black draperies until it was time for him to do his work. He had no wish to parade himself as part of that sad show.

In England the rules of etiquette were never more binding than upon those who were about to be beheaded. When the Duke of Hamilton, the Earl of Holland, and Lord Capel went to the block together, they were told they must die in the order of their rank, as though they were going in to dinner; and upon Lord Capel's offering to address the crowd without removing his hat, it was explained to him that this was incorrect. The scaffold was not the House of Parliament, and those who graced it were expected to uncover. On a later and very

memorable occasion, the Earl of Kilmarnock, "with a most just mixture of dignity and submission," offered the melancholy precedence to Lord Balmerino. That gallant soldier – "a natural, brave old gentleman," says Horace Walpole, though he was but fifty-eight – would have mounted first, but the headsman interfered. Even upon the scaffold, a belted earl enjoyed the privileges of his rank.

All this formality must have damped the spirits of the condemned; but it seems to have been borne with admirable gayety and good temper. Lord Balmerino, "decently unmoved," was ready to die first or last, and he gave the punctilious executioner three guineas, to prove that he was not impatient. "He looked quite unconcerned," says an eye-witness, "and like some one going on a party of pleasure, or upon some business of little or no importance." Lord Lovat, beheaded at eighty for his active share in the Jacobite rising of 'forty-five, derived much amusement from the vast concourse of people assembled to witness his execution; – an amusement agreeably intensified by the giving way of some scaffolding, which occasioned the unexpected death of several eager sight-seers. "The more mischief, the better sport," said the old lord grimly, and proceeded to quote Ovid and Horace with fine scholarly zest. If the executioner were seldom a person of education, it was from no lack of opportunity. He might, had he chosen, have learned at his post much law and more theology. When Archbishop Laud stood waiting by the block, Sir John Clotworthy conceived it to be a seasonable occasion for propounding some knotty points of doctrine. The prelate courteously answered one or two questions, but time pressed, and

controversy had lost its charms. Even so good a churchman may be pardoned for turning wearily away from polemics, when his life's span had narrowed down to minutes, and the headsman waited by his side.

In the burial registry of Whitechapel, under the year 1649, is the following entry:

"June 21st, Richard Brandon, a man out of Rosemary Lane. This Brandon is held to be the man who beheaded Charles the First."

"Held to be" only, for the mystery of the King's executioner was one which long excited and baffled curiosity. Wild whispers credited the deed to men of rank and station, among them Viscount Stair, the type of strategist to whom all manner of odium naturally and reasonably clings. A less distinguished candidate for the infamy was one William Howlett, actually condemned to death after the Restoration for a part he never played, and saved from the gallows only by the urgent efforts of a few citizens who swore that Brandon did the deed. Brandon was not available for retribution. He had died in his bed, five months after Charles was beheaded, and had been hurried ignominiously into his grave in Whitechapel churchyard. As public executioner of London, he could hardly escape his destiny; but it is said that remorse and horror shortened his life. In his supposed "Confession," a tract widely circulated at the time, he claimed that he was "fetched out of bed by a troup of horse," and carried against his will to the scaffold. Also that he was paid thirty pounds, all in half-crowns, for the work; and had "an orange stuck full of cloves, and a handkerchief out of the King's pocket." The orange he sold for ten shillings in Rosemary Lane.

The shadow that falls across the headsman's path deepens in horror when we contemplate the scaffolds of Charles, of Louis, of Marie Antoinette, and of Mary Stuart. The hand that has shed royal blood is stained forever, yet the very magnitude of the offence lends to it a painful and terrible distinction. It is the zenith as well as the nadir of the headsman's history; it is the corner-stone of the impassable barrier which divides the axe and the sword from the hangman's noose, the death of Strafford from the death of Jonathan Wild.

If we turn the page, and look for a moment at the "gallows tree," we find that it has its romantic and its comic side, but the comedy is boisterous, the romance savours of melodrama. For centuries one of the recognized amusements of the English people was to see men hanged, and the leading features of the entertainment were modified from time to time to please a popular taste. Dr. Johnson, the sanest as well as the best man of his day, highly commended these public executions as "satisfactory to all parties. The public is gratified by a procession, the criminal is supported by it." That the enjoyment was often mutual, it is impossible to deny. There was a world of meaning in the gentle custom, supported for years by a very ancient benefaction, of giving a nosegay to the condemned man on his way to Tyburn. Before the cart climbed Holborn Hill, – "the heavy hill" as it was called, with a touch of poetry rivaling the "Bridge of Sighs," – it stopped at Saint Sepulchre's church, and on the church steps stood one bearing in his hands the flowers that were to yield their fresh fragrance to the dying. Nor were the candidates without their modest pride. When the noted chimney-sweep, Sam Hall, achieved the honour of

a hanging, he was rudely jostled, and bidden to stand off by a highwayman, stepping haughtily into the cart, and annoyed at finding himself in such low company. "Stand off, yourself!" was the indignant answer of the young sweep. "I have as good a right to be here as you have."

"Nothing," says Voltaire, "is so disagreeable as to be obscurely hanged," and the loneliness which in this moral age encompasses the felon's last hours should be as salutary as it is depressing. Mr. Housman, who gets closer to the plain thoughts of plain men than any poet of modern times, has given stern expression to the awful aloofness of the condemned criminal from his fellow creatures, an aloofness unknown in the cheerful, brutal days of old.

> *They hang us now in Shrewsbury jail:*
> *The whistles blow forlorn,*
> *And trains all night groan on the rail*
> *To men who die at morn.*

The sociability of Tyburn, if somewhat vehement in character, was a jocund thing by the side of such solitude as this.

Parish registers make curious reading. They tell so much in words so scant and bald that they set us wondering on our own accounts over the unknown details of tragedies which even in their day won no wide hearing, and which have been wholly forgotten for centuries. Mr. Lang quotes two entries that are briefly comprehensive; the first from the register of Saint Nicholas, Durham, August 8, 1592: "Simson, Arington, Featherston, Fenwick, and Lancaster, were hanged for being Egyptians."

Featherston and Fenwick might have been hanged on the evidence of their names, good gypsy names both of them, and famous for years in the dark annals of the race; but were these men guilty of no other crime, no indiscretion even, that has escaped recording? Five stalwart rogues might have served the queen in better fashion than by dangling idly on a gallows. The second entry, from the parish church of Richmond in Yorkshire, 1558, is still shorter, a model of conciseness: "Richard Snell b'rnt, bur. 9 Sept."

Was Snell a martyr, unglorified by Fox, or a particularly desperate sinner; and if a sinner, what was the nature of his sin? Warlocks were commonly hanged in the sixteenth century, even when their sister witches were burned. "*C'est la loi de l'homme.*" In fact, burning was an unusual, and – save in Queen Mary's mind – an unpopular mode of punishment. "You are burnt for heresy," says Mr. Birrell with great good humour. "That is right enough. No one would complain of that. Hanging is a different matter. It is very easy to get hung; but to be burnt requires a combination of circumstances not always forthcoming."

Yet Richard Snell, yeoman of Yorkshire, mastered these circumstances; and a single line in a parish register is his meagre share of fame.

XIII

Consecrated to Crime

The breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there,
With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration.
– Fra Lippo Lippi.

Not long ago I saw these lines quoted to show the blessedness of sanctuary; quoted with a serious sentimentality which left no room for their more startling significance. The writer drew a parallel between the ruffian sheltered by his church and the soldier sheltered by his flag, forgiven much wrongdoing for the sake of the standard under which he has served and suffered. But Mr. Browning's murderer has not served the church. He is unforgiven, and, let us hope, eventually hanged. In the interval, however, he poses as a hero to the children, and as an object of lively interest to the pious and Mass-going Florentines. A lean monk praying on the altar steps would have awakened no sentiment in their hearts; yet even the frequency, the cheapness of crime failed to rob it of its lustre. It was not without reason that Plutarch preferred to write of wicked men. He had the pardonable desire of an author to be read.

In these less vivid days we are seldom brought into such picturesque contact with assassins. The majesty of the law is strenuously exerted to shield them from

open adulation. We have grown sensitive, too, and prone to consider our own safety, which we call the welfare of the public. Some of us believe that criminals are madmen, or sick men, who should be doctored rather than punished. On the whole, our emotions are too complex for the straightforward enjoyment with which our robust ancestors contemplated – and often committed – deeds of violence. Murder is to us no longer as

> *. . . a dish of tea,*
> *And treason, bread and butter.*

We have ceased to stomach such sharp condiments.

Yet something of the old glamour, the glamour with which the Serpent beguiled Eve, still hangs about historic sins, making them – as Plutarch knew – more attractive than historic virtues. Places consecrated to the memory of crime have so keen an interest that travellers search for them painstakingly, and are often both grieved and indignant because some blood-soaked hovel has not been carefully preserved by the ungrateful community which harboured – and hanged – the wretch who lived in it. I met in Edinburgh a disappointed tourist, – a woman and an American, – who had spent a long day searching vainly for the house in which Burke and Hare committed their ghastly murders, and for the still more hideous habitation of Major Weir and his sister. She had wandered for hours through the most offensive slums that Great Britain has to show; she had seen and heard and smelt everything that was disagreeable; she had made endless inquiries, and had been regarded as a troublesome lunatic; and all that she might look upon the dilapidated walls, behind which had been committed evils too vile for telling. And

this in Edinburgh, the city of great and sombre tragedies, where Mary Stuart held her court, and Montrose rode to the scaffold. With so many dark pages in her chronicles, one has scant need to burrow for ignoble guilt.

There are deeds, however, that have so coloured history, stained it so redly and so imperishably, that their seal is set upon the abodes that witnessed them, and all other associations grow dim and trivial by comparison. The murder of a Douglas or of a Guise by his sovereign is the apotheosis of crime, the zenith of horror. As long as the stones of Stirling or of Blois shall hold together, that horror shall be their dower. The walls shriek their tale. They make a splendid and harmonious background for the tragedy that gives them life. They are fitting guardians of their fame. It can never be sufficiently regretted that the murder of Darnley had so mean a setting, and that the methods employed by the murderers have left us little even of that meanness. Some bleak fortress in the north should have sheltered a crime so long impending, and so grimly wrought; but perhaps the paltriness of the victim merited no better *mise en scène*. The Douglas and the Guise were made of sterner stuff, and the world – the tourist world – pays in its vapouring fashion a tribute to their strength. It buys pathetically incongruous souvenirs of the "Douglas room;" and it traces every step by which the great Duke, the head and the heart of the League, went scornfully to his death.

Blois *has* associations that are not murderous. It saw the solemn consecration of the standard of Joan of Arc, and the splendid feasts which celebrated the auspicious betrothal of Henry of Navarre to his Valois bride. The statue of Louis the Twelfth, "Father of his people," sits

stiffly astride of its caparisoned charger above the entrance gate. But it is not upon Joan, nor upon Navarre, nor upon good King Louis that the traveller wastes a thought. The ghosts that dominate the château are those of Catherine de Medici, of her son, wanton in wickedness, and of the murdered Guise. Castle guides are notoriously short of speech, sparing of time, models of bored indifference. But the guardian of Blois waxes eloquent over the tale he has to tell, and, with the dramatic instinct of his race, strives to put its details vividly before our eyes. He assigns to each assassin his post, shows where the wretched young king concealed himself until the deed was done, and points out the exact spot in the Cabinet Vieux where the first blow was struck. "Behold the perfect tableau!" he winds up enthusiastically, and we are forced to admit that, as a tableau, it lacks no element of success. Mr. Henry James's somewhat cynical appreciation of this "perfect episode" – perfect, from the dramatist's point of view – recurs inevitably to our minds:

"The picture is full of light and darkness, full of movement, full altogether of abominations. Mixed up with them all is the great theological motive, so that the drama wants little to make it complete. The insolent prosperity of the victim; the weakness, the vices, the terrors of the author of the deed; the admirable execution of the plot; the accumulation of horror in what followed, – render it, as a crime, one of the classic things."

Classic surely were the repeated warnings, so determinedly ignored. Cæsar was not more plainly cautioned of his danger than was the Duke of Guise. Cæsar was not more resolved to live his life fearlessly, or to die. Cæsar

was not harder to kill. It takes many a dagger stroke to release a strong spirit from its clay.

There were dismal prophecies months ahead, advance couriers of the slowly maturing plot. "Before the year dies, you shall die," was the message sent to the Duke when the States-General were summoned to Blois. His mother, ceaselessly apprehensive, his mistress, Charlotte de Sauves, besought him to leave the château. Nine ominous notes, crumpled bits of paper, each written at the peril of a life, admonished him of his fate. The ninth was thrust into his hand as he made his way for the last time to the council chamber. "*Le ciel sombre et triste*" frowned forebodingly upon him as he crossed the terrace, and La Salle and D'Aubercourt strove even then to turn him back. At the foot of the beautiful spiral staircase sat the jester, Chicot, singing softly under his breath a final word of warning, "*Hé, j'ay Guise.*" He dared no more, and he dared that much in vain. The Duke passed him disdainfully, and – smitten by the gods with madness – went lightly up the steps to meet his doom.

This is the story that Blois has to tell, and she tells it with terrible distinctness. She is so steeped in blood, so shadowed by the memory of her crime, that there is scant need for her guides to play their official parts, nor for her museum walls to be hung round with feeble representations of the tragedy. But it is strange, after all, that the beautiful home of Francis the First should not speak to us more audibly of him. He built its right wing, "the most joyous utterance of the French Renaissance." He stamped his own exuberant gayety upon every detail. His salamander curls its carven tail over stairs and doors and window sills. He is surely a figure striking enough,

and familiar enough to enchain attention. Why do we not think about him, and about those ladies of "mutable connections" whose names echo buoyantly from his little page of history? Why do our minds turn obstinately to the Cabinet Vieux, or to those still more mirthless rooms above where Catherine de Medici lived and died. "*Il y a de méchantes qualités qui font de grandes talents*," but these qualities were noticeably lacking in the Queen Mother. It is not the good she tried and failed to do, but the evil that she wrought which gives her a claim to our magnetized interest and regard.

To the tolerant observer it seems a work of supererogation, a gilding of refined gold, to add to the sins of really accomplished sinners like Catherine and Louis the Eleventh. These sombre souls have left scant space for our riotous imaginations to fill in. Their known deeds are terrible enough to make us quail. It might be more profitable – as it is certainly more irksome – to search for their redeeming traits: the tact, the mental vigour of the queen, and the efforts she made to bind together the distracted factions of France; the courage, sagacity, and unflinching resolution with which Louis strengthened his kingdom, and protected those whose mean estate made them wholly uninteresting to nobler monarchs. These things are worth consideration, but far be it from us to consider them. High lights and heavy shadows please us best; and by this time the shadows have been so well inked that their blackness is impenetrable. It can never be said of Catherine de Medici, as it is said of Mary Stuart, that she has been injured by the zeal of her friends, and helped by the falsehoods of her enemies. Catherine has few friends, and none whose enthusiasm

is burdensome to bear. She has furnished easily-used material for writers of romance, who commonly represent her as depopulating France with poisoned gloves and perfumery; and she has served as a target – too big to be missed – for tyros in historical invective. We have come to regard her in a large, loose, picturesque way as an embodiment of evil, – very much, perhaps, as Mr. John Addington Symonds regards Clytemnestra, – fed and nourished by her sins, waxing fat upon iniquity, and destitute alike of conscience and of shame. And this is the reason that women who have spent their lives in the practice of laborious virtues stand fluttering with delight in that dark Medicean bedchamber. "Blois is the most interesting of all the chateaux," said one of them to me; – she looked as if she could not even tell a lie; – "you see the very bed in which Catherine de Medici died." And I thought of the Florentine children at the altar steps.

Mr. Andrew Lang is of the opinion that if an historical event could be discredited, like a ghost story, by discrepancies in the evidence, we might maintain that Darnley was never murdered at all. We might also be led to doubt the existence of Cardinal Balue's cage, that ingenious torture-chamber which has added so largely and so deservedly to the reputation of Louis the Eleventh. There is a drawing of the cage, or rather of *a* cage, still to be seen, and there is the bill for its making; – what a prop to history are well-kept household accounts! – while, on the other hand, its ubiquitous nature staggers our trusting faith. Loches claims it as one of her traditions, and so does Plessis-les-Tours. Loches is so rich in horrors that she can afford to dispense with a few; but the cage, if it ever existed at all, was undoubtedly

one of the permanent decorations of her tower. The room in which it hung is cheerful and commodious when compared to the black prison of Saint Valier, or to the still deeper dungeon of the Bishops of Puy and Autun. The cardinal could at least see and be seen, if that were any amelioration of his lot, and we are still shown the turret stairs down which the king stepped warily when he came to visit his prisoner.

But Plessis-les-Tours covets the distinction of the cage. She is not without some dismal memories of her own, though she looks like a dismantled factory, and she strives with pardonable ambition to make them dismaler. The energetic and intelligent woman who conducts visitors around her mouldering walls has, in a splendid spirit of assurance, selected for this purpose a small dilapidated cellar, open to the sky, and a small dilapidated flight of steps, not more than seven in number. Beneath these steps – where a terrier might perhaps curl himself in comfort – she assured us with an unflinching front the cardinal's cage was tucked; and reading the doubt in our veiled eyes, she stooped and pointed out a rusty bit of iron riveted in the wall. "See," she said triumphantly, "there still remains one of the fastenings of the cage." The argument was irresistible:

Behold this Walrus tooth.

The fact is that it has been found necessary to exert a great deal of ingenuity in order to meet the popular demand for cold-blooded cruelty where Louis the Eleventh is concerned. He is an historic bugbear, a hobgoblin, at whose grim ghost we grown-up children like to shudder apprehensively. Scott, with a tolerance as wide as

Shakespeare's own, has dared to give a finer colour to the picture, has dared to engage our sympathy for this implacable old man who knew how to "hate and wait," how to lie in ambush, and how to drive relentlessly to his goal. But even Scott has been unable to subdue our cherished antipathy, or to modify the deep prejudices instilled early into our minds. Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson, who of all writers has least patience with schoolbook verdicts, hits hard at our narrow fidelity to censorship. "It is probably more instructive," he says, "to entertain a sneaking kindness for any unpopular person than to give way to perfect raptures of moral indignation against his abstract vices."

Now a more unpopular, a more comprehensively unlovable person than Louis it would be hard to find. He did much for France, yet France drew a deep breath of relief when he died.

Il n'est pas sire de son pays,
Quy de son peple n'est pas amez.

Those who fail to entertain the "sneaking kindness" recommended by Mr. Stevenson may shelter themselves behind this ancient couplet. "Of him there is an end. God pardon him his sins," is Froissart's fashion of summing up every man's career. It will serve as well for Louis as for another.

But to gratify at once our prejudices and our emotions, a generous mass of legend has been added to the chronicles of Loches, Blois, Amboise, and other castles that are consecrated to the crimes of kings. History, though flexible and complaisant up to a certain point, has her limits of accommodation. She has also her cold white

lights, and her disconcerting truths, so annoying, and so invariably ill-timed in their revelations. We can never be quite sure that History, however obliging she seems, will not suddenly desert our rightful cause, and go over to our opponents. We have but to remember what trouble she has given, and in what an invidious, not to say churlish spirit she has contradicted the most masterly historians. It is best to ignore her altogether, and to tell our stories without any reference to her signature.

So thought the sensible young woman who led us captive through the collegiate church at Loches, and who insisted upon our descending into the crypt, at one time connected with the fortress by a subterranean gallery. Its dim walls are decorated here and there with mural paintings, rude and half effaced. She pointed out the shadowy outline of a saint in cope and mitre, his stiff forefinger raised in benediction. "That," she said with startling composure, "is the bishop who was the confessor of Louis the Eleventh. The king had him buried alive in this chapel, so that he might not betray the secrets of his confession."

"And did the king have him painted on the wall afterwards, to commemorate the circumstance?" asked the scoffer of the party, at whom others gazed reproachfully, while I wondered how the story of Saint John of Nepomuk had travelled so far afield, and why it had been so absurdly reset to add another shade to Louis's memory. It hardly seemed worth while, in view of the legitimate darkness of the horizon. It even seemed a pity. It forced a laugh, and laughter is inharmonious beneath the walls of Loches. But if the king, whose piety was of a vigorous and active order, had the habit of walling up his con-

fessors, there must have been some rational hesitation on the part of even the most devoted clerics when his Majesty sought to be shriven; and the stress of royal conscientiousness – combined with royal apprehension – must have shortened the somewhat hazardous road to church preferment. The fact that Louis never wasted his cruelties, that they were one and all the fruits of deep and secret hostility, might have saved him from being the hero of such fantastic myths.

It was more amusing to visit the picturesque old house in Tours, known as le Maison de Tristan l'Ermite. How it came to be associated with that melancholy and industrious hangman, who had been dead half a century when its first stone was laid, has never been made clear; unless, indeed, the familiar device of the festooned cord, the emblem of Anne de Bretagne, which is carved over door and windows, may be held responsible for the suggestion. Once christened, however, it has become a centre of finely imaginative romance, – romance of a high order, which for finish of detail may be recommended to the careless purveyors of historic fiction. Passing through the heavy doorway into a beautiful sombre courtyard, we had hardly time to admire its proportions, and the curious little stone beasts which wanton wickedly in dark corners, before a gaunt woman, who is the guardian spirit of the place, summoned us to ascend an interminable flight of steps, much worn and dimly lit. They had an ominous look, and the woman's air of mystery, subtly blent with resolution, was in admirable accord with her surroundings. From time to time she paused to point out a shallow niche which had formerly held a lamp, or a broken place in the wall's rough masonry. "*L'oubliette*,"

she whispered grimly, pointing to the hole which revealed – and gainsaid – nothing. There was a small walled-up door, equally reserved, which she said was, or had been, the opening of a secret passage connecting the house with the château of Plessis-les-Tours, more than two miles away. The full significance of this remark failed to dawn upon us until we had climbed up, up, up, and emerged at last upon a narrow balcony overlooking the sad courtyard far below, and protected by a heavy iron railing. It was a disagreeable place, not without its suggestions of horror; yet were we in no wise prepared for the recital that followed. From this railing, said our guide, Tristan l'Ermite was in the habit of hanging the victims whom Louis the Eleventh, "that great and prompt chastener," confided to his mercy. I could not help murmuring at the cruelty which compelled the unfortunates to mount nearly two hundred steps to be hanged, when the courtyard beneath offered every reasonable accommodation; but, even as I spoke, I recognized the poverty of imagination which could prompt such a stupid speech. Perhaps some direful memory of the *Balcon des Conjures* at Amboise may be held responsible for the web of fiction which has been woven about this grim eyrie of Tours; and if the picture lacks the magnificent setting of the Amboise tragedy, it is by no means destitute of power. There is a certain grandeur in being hanged from such a dizzy height.

Our guide next pointed out the opening of the mythical oubliette. If the condemned toiled wearily up to their beetling scaffold, the executioners were spared at least the labour of carrying their bodies down again. After they had been picturesquely hanged under the king's own eye, – for we were asked to believe that Louis walked

two miles along a subterranean passage to inspect the ordinary, and by no means infrequent, processes of justice, – the corpses were tumbled into the oubliette, and made their own headlong way to the Loire.

One more detail was added to this interesting and deeply coloured fable. The right-hand wall of the courtyard was studded, on a level with the balcony, with huge rusty iron nails. There were rows upon rows of these unlovely and apparently useless objects which tradition had not failed to turn to good account. For every man hanged on that spot by the indefatigable Tristan, a nail was, it seems, driven into the wall, which thus became a sort of baker's tally or tavern slate. We counted forty-four nails. The woman nodded her head with serious satisfaction. Frequent repetitions of her story had brought her almost to the point of believing it. She had ministered so long to the tastes of tourists – who like to think that Louis hanged his subjects as liberally as Catherine de Medici poisoned hers – that she had gradually moulded her narrative into symmetry, making use of every available feature to give it consistency and grace. The fine old house – which may have harboured tragedies of its own as sombre as any wrought by Tristan's hand – lent itself with true architectural sympathy to the illusion. Some habitations can do this thing, can look to perfection the parts assigned them by history or by tradition. Who that has ever seen the "Jew's House" at Lincoln can forget the peculiar horror that broods over the dark, ill-omened doorway? The place is peopled by ghosts. Beneath its heavy lintel pass little trembling feet. From out the shadows comes a strangled cry. It tells its tale better than Chaucer or the balladists; with less pity and more

fear, less detail and more suggestiveness. We shudder as we peer into its gloom, yet we linger, magnetized by the subtlety of association. It may be innocent, – poor, huddled mass of stone, – but we hope not. We are like the children at the altar-foot, spellbound by the vision of a crime.

XIV

Allegra

A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made;
A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being;
Graceful without design, and unforeseeing;
With eyes – Oh! speak not of her eyes! which seem
Two mirrors of Italian heaven.

In these Wordsworthian lines Shelley describes Lord Byron's little daughter, Allegra, then under two years of age; and the word "toy" – so keenly suggestive of both the poetic and the masculine point of view – has in this case an unconscious and bitter significance. Allegra was a toy at which rude hands plucked violently, until death lifted her from their clutches, and hid her away in the safety and dignity of the tomb. "She is more fortunate than we are," said her father, with a noble and rare lapse into simplicity, and the words were sadly true. Never did a little child make a happier escape from the troublesome burden of life.

In the winter of 1816, a handsome, vivacious, dark-eyed girl sought the acquaintance of Lord Byron, and begged him to use his influence in obtaining for her an engagement at Drury Lane. She was the type of young woman who aspires to a career on the stage, or in any other field, without regard to qualifications, and without the burden of study. She wrote in her first letter (it had many successors): "The theatre presents an easy

method of independence." She objected vehemently to the intolerable drudgery of provincial boards." She wanted to appear at once in London. And she signed her name, "Clara Clairmont," which was prettily alliterative, and suited her better than Jane.

It was an inauspicious beginning of an unhappy intimacy, destined to bring nothing but disaster in its train. Miss Clairmont's stepfather, William Godwin, had confessed, not without reason, "a feeling of incompetence for the education of daughters." His own child, Mary, had fled to Europe eighteen months before, with the poet Shelley. Miss Clairmont accompanied their flight; and their inexplicable folly in taking her with them was punished – as folly always is – with a relentless severity seldom accorded to sin. To the close of Shelley's life, his sister-in-law continued to be a source of endless irritation and anxiety.

No engagement at Drury Lane was procurable. Indeed, Miss Clairmont soon ceased to desire one. Her infatuation for Lord Byron drove all other thoughts and hopes and ambitions from her heart. She wrote to him repeatedly, – clever, foolish, half-mad, and cruelly long letters. She praised the "wild originality of his countenance." She sent him her manuscripts to read. There is something pathetic in Byron's unheeded entreaty that she should "write short." There is something immeasurably painful in his unconcealed indifference, in his undisguised contempt. The glamour of his fame as a poet gave a compelling power to that fatal beauty which was his undoing. When we read what *men* have written about Byron's head; when we recall the rhapsodies of Moore, the reluctant praise of Trelawney, the eloquence

of Coleridge; when we remember that Scott – the sanest man in Great Britain – confessed ruefully that Byron's face was a thing to dream of, we are the less surprised that women should have flung themselves at his feet in a frenzy of self-surrender, which a cold legacy of busts and portraits does little to explain. Miss Clairmont – to use one of Professor Dowden's flowers of speech – "was lightly whirled out of her regular orbit." In the spring she travelled with Shelley and Mary Godwin to Switzerland, and at Sécheron, a little suburb of Geneva, they met Lord Byron, who was then writing the splendid third canto of "Childe Harold." His letter to his sister, the Hon. Augusta Leigh, bears witness to his annoyance at the encounter; but the two poets became for a season daily companions, and, in some sort, friends. Shelley thought Byron "as mad as the winds" (an opinion which was returned with interest), and deeply regretted his slavery "to the vilest and most vulgar prejudices;" – among them a prejudice in favour of Christianity, for which ancient institution Byron always entertained a profound though unfruitful reverence. Indeed, despite the revolutionary impetus of his verse, and despite the fact that he died for revolting Greece, the settled order of things appealed with force to his eminently practical nature. "Sanity and balance," says Mr. Motley, "mark the foundations of his character. An angel of reasonableness seems to watch over him, even when he comes most dangerously near to an extravagance."

Miss Clairmont did not confide to her guardians the secret of her intimacy with Lord Byron until after the meeting at Geneva. When her relations with him were understood, neither Shelley nor Mary Godwin saw at

first any occasion for distress. They cared nothing for the broken marriage bond, and they believed, or hoped, that some true affection had been – as in their own case – the impelling and upholding power. It was the swift withering of this hope which filled their hearts with apprehension. They carried Miss Clairmont back to England in the autumn ("I have had all the plague possible to persuade her to go back," wrote Byron to his sister); and in Bath, the following January, her little daughter was born.

It was a blue-eyed baby of exceptional loveliness. Mrs. Shelley (Mary Godwin had been married to the poet on the death of his wife, two months earlier) fills her letters with praises of its beauty. Miss Clairmont wrote to Byron in 1820 that her health had been injured by her "attentions" to her child during its first year; but she found time to study Italian, and to write a book, for which Shelley tried in vain to find a publisher, and the very title of which is now forgotten. The little household at Great Marlow was not a tranquil one. Mrs. Shelley had grown weary of her step-sister's society. Her diary – all these young people kept diaries with uncommendable industry – abounds in notes, illustrative of Claire's ill-temper, and of her own chronic irritation. "Clara imagines that I treat her unkindly." "Clara in an ill humour." "Jane* gloomy." "Jane for some reason refuses to walk." "Jane is not well, and does not speak the whole day."

This was bad enough, but there were other moods more trying than mere sulkiness. Miss Clairmont possessed nerves. She had "the horrors" when "King Lear" was

*Clara Mary Jane Clairmont was "Claire's" full name.

read aloud. She was, or professed to be, afraid of ghosts. She would come downstairs in the middle of the night to tell Shelley that an invisible hand had lifted her pillow from her bed, and dumped it on a chair. To such thrilling recitals the poet lent serious attention. "Her manner," he wrote in his journal, "convinced me that she was not deceived. We continued to sit by the fire, at intervals engaged in awful conversation, relative to the nature of these mysteries;" – that is, to the migrations of the pillow. As a result of sympathetic treatment, Claire would wind up the night with hysterics, writhing in convulsions on the floor, and shrieking dismally, until poor Mrs. Shelley would be summoned from a sick-bed to soothe her to slumber. "Give me a garden, and *absentia* Claire, and I will thank my love for many favours," is the weary comment of the wife, after months of inextinguishable agitation.

There was no loophole of escape, however, from a burden so rashly shouldered. Miss Clairmont made one or two ineffectual efforts at self-support; but found them little to her liking. She could not, and she would not, live with her mother, Mrs. Godwin; – "a very disgusting woman, and wears green spectacles," is Charles Lamb's description of this lady, whom, in common with most of her acquaintances, he cordially disliked. When Byron wrote, offering to receive and provide for his little daughter, Shelley vehemently opposed the plan, thinking it best that so young an infant should remain under its mother's care. But his wife, who was at heart a singularly sagacious woman, never ceased to urge the advisability of the step. Claire, though reluctant to part from her baby, yielded to these persuasions; and the journey to

Italy in the spring of 1818 was undertaken mainly as a sure though expensive method of conveying Allegra to her father.

That Byron wanted the child, there is no doubt, nor that he had been from the first deeply concerned for her uncertain future. Three months after her birth, he wrote to his sister that he had resolved to send for her, and place her in a convent, "to become a good Catholic, and (it may be) a nun, – being a character somewhat needed in our family." "They tell me," he adds, "that she is very pretty, with blue eyes and dark hair; and although I never was attached, nor pretended attachment to the mother, still, in case of the eternal war and alienation which I foresee about my legitimate daughter, Ada, it may be as well to have something to repose a hope upon. I must love something in my old age; and circumstances may render this poor little creature a great, and perhaps my only, comfort."

It is not often that Byron's letters reveal this grace of sentiment. Never, after Allegra's arrival, does he allude to any affection he bears her, and he once assured Moore that he did not bear any; – a statement which that partial biographer thought fit to disregard. On the other hand, he dwells over and over again, both in his correspondence and in his journal, upon plans for her education and future settlement. He was at all times sternly practical, and pitilessly clear-sighted. He never regarded his daughter as a "lovely toy," but as a very serious and troublesome responsibility. The poetic view of childhood failed to appeal to him. "Any other father," wrote Claire bitterly, "would have made of her infancy a sweet idyl of flowers and innocent joy." Byron

was not idyllic. He dosed Allegra with quinine when she had a fever. He abandoned a meditated journey because she was ill. He dismissed a servant who had let her fall. He added a codicil to his will, bequeathing her five thousand pounds. These things do not indicate any stress of emotion, but they have their place in the ordinary calendar of parental cares.

A delicate baby, not yet sixteen months old, was a formidable and inharmonious addition to the poet's Venetian household. The Swiss nurse, Elise, who had been sent by the Shelleys from Milan, proved to be a most incapable and unworthy woman, who later on made infinite mischief by telling the foulest of lies. Byron was sorely perplexed by the situation; and when Mrs. Hoppner, the Genevan wife of the English consul-general, offered to take temporary charge of the child, he gladly and gratefully consented. One difficulty in his path he had not failed to foresee; – that Claire, having relinquished Allegra of her own free will, would quickly want her back again. In fact, before the end of the summer, Miss Clairmont insisted upon going to Venice, and poor Shelley very ruefully and reluctantly accompanied her. Byron received *him* with genuine delight, and, in an access of good humour, proposed lending the party his villa at Este. There Mrs. Shelley, who had lost her infant daughter, might recover from sorrow and fatigue, and there Allegra might spend some weeks under her mother's care. The offer was frankly accepted, and the two men came once more to an amicable understanding. They were not fitted to be friends, – the gods had ruled a severance wide and deep; – but when unpricked by the contentiousness of other people, they passed pleasant and profitable hours together.

Meanwhile, the poor little apple of discord was ripening every day into a fairer bloom. "Allegra has been with me these three months," writes Byron to his sister in August. "She is very pretty, remarkably intelligent, and a great favourite with everybody.... She has very blue eyes, a singular forehead, fair curly hair, and a devil of a Spirit, – but that is Papa's." "I have here my natural daughter, by name Allegra," he tells Moore six weeks later. "She is a pretty little girl enough, and reckoned like Papa." To Murray he writes in the same paternal strain. "My daughter Allegra is well, and growing pretty; her hair is growing darker, and her eyes are blue. Her temper and her ways, Mr. Hoppner says, are like mine, as well as her features. She will make, in that case, a manageable young lady."

Other pens bear ready witness to Allegra's temper. Mr. Jeaffreson, who has written a very offensive book about Lord Byron, takes pains to tell us that the poor child was "greedy, passionate, and, in her fifth year, precocious, vain and saucy." Mr. Hoppner, after the publication of the Countess Guiccioli's "Recollections," wrote an agitated letter to the "Athenum," assuring an indifferent public that he had no acquaintance with the lady, and that his own respectability was untarnished by any intimacy with the poet, of whose morals he disapproved, and whose companionship he eschewed, save when they rode together, – on Byron's horses. "Allegra was not by any means an amiable child," he added sourly, "nor was Mrs. Hoppner nor I particularly fond of her."

It could hardly have been expected that the daughter of Byron and Claire Clairmont would have been "amiable;" nor can we wonder that Mr. Hoppner, who had a seven-

months-old baby of his own, should have failed to wax enthusiastic over another infant. But his warm-hearted wife did love her little charge, and grieved sincerely when the child's quick temper subsided into listlessness under the fierce Italian heat. "Mon petit brille, et il est toujours gai et sautillant," she wrote prettily to the Shelleys, after their departure from Venice; "et Allegra, par contre, est devenue tranquille et sérieuse, comme une petite vieille, ce que nous peine beaucoup."

Byron was frankly grateful to Mrs. Hoppner for her kindness to his daughter; and after he had carried the child to Ravenna, where the colder, purer air brought back her gayety and bloom, he wrote again and again to her former guardians, now thanking them for "a whole treasure of toys" which they had sent, now assuring them that "Allegrina is flourishing like a pomegranate blossom," and now reiterating the fact which seemed to make most impression upon his mind, – that she was growing prettier and more obstinate every day. He added many little details about her childish ailments, her drives with the Countess Guiccioli, and her popularity in his household. It was to the over-indulgence of his servants, as well as to heredity, that he traced her high temper and imperious will. He consulted Mrs. Hopper more than once about Allegra's education; and he poured into her husband's ears his bitter resentment at Miss Clairmont's pardonable, but exasperating interference.

For Claire, clever about most things, was an adept in the art of provocation. She wrote him letters calculated to try the patience of a saint, and he retaliated by a cruel and contemptuous silence. In vain Shelley attempted to play the difficult part of peacemaker. "I wonder," he

pleaded, "at your being provoked by what Claire writes, though that she should write what is provoking is very probable. You are conscious of performing your duty to Allegra, and your refusal to allow her to visit Claire at this distance you conceive to be part of that duty. That Claire should have wished to see her is natural. That her disappointment should vex her, and her vexation make her write absurdly, is all in the natural order of things. But, poor thing, she is very unhappy and in bad health, and she ought to be treated with as much indulgence as possible. The weak and the foolish are in this respect the kings, – they can do no wrong."

Byron was less generous. The weak and the foolish – especially when their weakness and folly took the form of hysteria – irritated him beyond endurance. The penalty that an hysterical woman pays for her self-indulgence is that no one believes in the depth or sincerity of her emotions. Byron had no pity for the pain that Claire was suffering. She was to him simply a young woman who never lost an opportunity to make a scene, and he hated scenes. On one point he was determined. Allegra should never again be sent to her mother, nor to the Shelleys. He had views of his own upon the education of little girls, which by no means corresponded with theirs.

"About Allegra," he writes to Mr. Hoppner in 1820, "I can only say to Claire that I so totally disapprove of the mode of Children's treatment in their family, that I should look upon the Child as going into a hospital. Is it not so? Have they reared one? Her health has hitherto been excellent, and her temper not bad. She is sometimes vain and obstinate, but always clean and cheerful; and as, in a year or two, I shall either send her

to England, or put her in a Convent for education, these defects will be remedied as far as they can in human nature. But the Child shall not quit me again to perish of Starvation and green fruit, or be taught to believe that there is no Deity. Whenever there is convenience of vicinity and access, her Mother can always have her with her; otherwise no. It was so stipulated from the beginning."

Five months later, he reiterates these painfully prosaic views. He has taken a house in the country, because the air agrees better with Allegra. He has two maids to attend her. He is doing his best, and he is very angry at Claire's last batch of letters. "Were it not for the poor little child's sake," he writes, "I am almost tempted to send her back to her atheistical mother, but that would be too bad.... If Claire thinks that she shall ever interfere with the child's morals or education, she mistakes; she never shall. The girl shall be a Christian, and a married woman, if possible."

On these two points Byron had set his heart. The Countess Guiccioli – kindly creature – assures us that "his dearest paternal care was the religious training to be given to his natural daughter, Allegra;" and while the words of this sweet advocate weigh little in the scale, they are in some degree confirmed by the poet's conduct and correspondence. When he felt the growing insecurity of his position in Ravenna, he determined to place the child at a convent school twelve miles away, and he explained very clearly and concisely to all whom it might concern his reasons for the step. "Allegra is now four years old complete," he wrote to Mr. Hoppner in April, 1821; "and as she is quite above the control of the servants, and as a

man living without any woman at the head of his house cannot much attend to a nursery, I had no resource but to place her for a time (at a high pension too) in the convent of Bagnacavallo (twelve miles off), where the air is good, and where she will, at least, have her learning advanced, and her morals and religion inculcated. I had also another motive. Things were and are in such a state here, that I have no reason to look upon my own personal safety as insurable, and thought the infant best out of harm's way for the present.

"It is also fit that I should add that I by no means intended nor intend to give a natural child an English education, because, with the disadvantages of her birth, her after settlement would be doubly difficult. Abroad, with a fair foreign education, and a portion of five or six thousand pounds, she might and may marry very respectably. In England, such a dowry would be a pittance, while elsewhere it is a fortune. It is, besides, my wish that she should be a Roman Catholic, a religion which I look upon as the best, as it is assuredly the oldest, of the various branches of Christianity. I have now explained my notions as to the place where she is. It is the best I could find for the present, but I have no prejudices in its favour."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner were strongly in favour of a Swiss, rather than an Italian school; and Byron, who never doubted the sincerity of their affection for his child, lent a ready ear to their suggestions. "If I had but known your ideas about Switzerland before," he wrote to Mr. Hoppner in May; "I should have adopted them at once. As it is, I shall let Allegra remain in her convent, where she seems healthy and happy, for the present. But

I shall feel much obliged if you will inquire, when you are in the cantons, about the usual and better modes of education there for females, and let me know the result of your inquiries. It is some consolation that both Mr. and Mrs. Shelley have written to approve entirely of my placing the child with the nuns for the present. I can refer to my whole conduct, as having spared no trouble, nor kindness, nor expense, since she was sent to me. People may say what they please. I must content myself with not deserving (in this case) that they should speak ill.

"The place is a country town, in a good air, where there is a large establishment for education, and many children, some of considerable rank, placed in it. As a country town, it is less liable to objections of every kind. It has always appeared to me that the moral defect in Italy does not proceed from a conventual training, – because, to my certain knowledge, girls come out of their convents innocent, even to ignorance, of moral evil; – but to the society into which they are plunged directly on coming out of it. It is like educating an infant on a mountain top, and then taking him to the sea, and throwing him into it, and desiring him to swim."

Other letters to Mr. Hoppner, to Shelley, and to Moore are equally practical and explicit. Byron writes that he has regular reports of Allegra's health; that she has mastered her alphabet; that he is having her reared a Catholic, "so that she may have her hands full;" that he meditates increasing her dowry, "if I live, and she is correct in her conduct;" that he thinks a Swiss gentleman might make her a better husband than an Italian. Pamela the virtuous was not more set upon her own

"marriage lines" than was Lord Byron upon his daughter's. Respectability was the golden boon he coveted for the poor little pledge of an illicit and unhappy passion. No one knew better than he how well it is to walk a safe and sheltered road; and no correct church-going father in England was ever more concerned for the decent settlement of his child.

There were others who took a more impassioned view of the situation. Miss Clairmont was spending her Carnival merrily in Florence, when word came that Allegra had been sent to school. It was a blow, says Professor Dowden, "under which she staggered and reeled." In vain Shelley and his wife represented to her the wisdom of the step. In vain Byron wrote that the air of the Romagna was exceptionally good, and that he paid double fees for his little daughter, to insure her every care and attention. Claire, piteously unreasonable, answered only with frenzied reproaches and appeals. She taunted the poet with his unhappy married life, – which was applying vitriol to a raw wound; she inveighed against the "ignorance and degradation" of convent-reared women, she implored permission to carry her child to England. "I propose," she wrote, with maddening perversity, "to place her at my own expense in one of the very best English boarding-schools, where, if she is deprived of the happiness of a home and paternal care, she at least would receive an English education, which would enable her, after many years of painful and unprotected childhood, to be benefited by the kindness and affection of her parents' friends.... By adopting this plan, you will save yourself credit and also the expense; and the anxiety for

her safety and well-being need never trouble you. You will become as free as if you had no such tie."

As an example of the purely exasperating, this letter has few peers in recorded correspondence. "At my own expense," meant at Shelley's expense; and Byron, loving or unloving, had never sought to shirk his paternal responsibilities. The alluring prospect of freedom from all concern offered little temptation to a father who had his child's future very seriously at heart. Miss Clairmont was surrounded at this time by a group of eminently foolish counsellors, the most prominent of whom were Lady Mountcashell, Mr. Tighe, and Miss Elizabeth Parker. Lady Mountcashell had a venerable husband in England, but preferred living in Italy with Mr. Tighe. There she employed her leisure in writing a book upon the training of children, – a work which her friends highly esteemed, and which they held to be an ample compensation to society for any irregularities in her own life. The couple were known as Mr. and Mrs. Mason. Miss Parker was an orphan girl, sent from England by Mrs. Godwin to be a companion to Lady Mountcashell, and profit by her example. These people kept alive in Claire's heart the flame of resentment and unrest. Mr. Tighe dwelt mournfully upon the austerity, as well as upon the degradation of convent life, until the mother's grief grew so excessive that in August, 1821, the long-suffering Shelley made a pilgrimage to Ravenna and to Bagnacavallo, to see how Allegra was placed, and to assure himself of her health and happiness. His charming letter – too long to be quoted in full – gives us the prettiest imaginable picture of a little schoolgirl, not yet five years old.

"I went the other day to see Allegra at her convent, and stayed with her about three hours. She is grown tall and slight for her age, and her face is somewhat altered. She yet retains the beauty of her deep blue eyes and of her mouth; but she has a contemplative seriousness, which, mixed with her excessive vivacity which has not yet deserted her, has a very peculiar effect in a child. She is under strict discipline, as may be observed from the immediate obedience she accords to the will of her attendants. This seems contrary to her nature; but I do not think it has been obtained at the expense of much severity. Her hair, scarcely darker than it was, is beautifully profuse, and hangs in large curls on her neck. She was prettily dressed in white muslin, and an apron of black silk, with trousers. Her light and airy figure and her graceful motions were a striking contrast to the other children there. She seemed a thing of a finer and a higher order. At first she was very shy; but after a little caressing, and especially after I had given her a gold chain which I had bought for her at Ravenna, she grew more familiar, and led me all over the garden, and all over the convent, running and skipping so fast that I could hardly keep up with her. She showed me her little bed, and the chair where she sat at dinner, and the *carozzina* in which she and her favourite companions drew each other along a walk in the garden. I had brought her a basket of sweetmeats, and, before eating any of them, she gave her friends and each of the nuns a portion. This is not like the old Allegra.... Her intellect is not much cultivated. She knows certain *orazioni* by heart, and talks and dreams of *Paradiso* and all sorts of things, and has a prodigious list of saints, and is always talking of

the Bambino. This will do her no harm; but the idea of bringing up so sweet a creature in the midst of such trash 'till sixteen."

Shelley's content with Allegra's situation (the little tempest-tossed bark had at last sailed into quiet waters) failed to bring comfort to Claire. The convent walls rose – a hopeless barrier – between mother and child; and the finality of the separation weighed cruelly upon her spirits. One of her most bitter grievances was the fear that her daughter was being educated with the children of tradespeople, – an unfounded alarm, as we see from the list compiled by Signor Biondi of the little *marchesas* and *contessas* who were Allegra's playmates. Another, and a reasonable anxiety, came with the approach of winter. Miss Clairmont then thinks less about the ignorance and immorality of Italian women, and more about the undoubted cold of Italian convents. She is afraid, and naturally afraid, that her child is not warm enough. There is one piteous letter in which she says that she cannot look at a glowing fire without a sorrowful remembrance of her little daughter in the chilly convent halls.

All these sources of disquietude were strengthened the following year by a new and unreasoning terror. Miss Clairmont appears to have actually persuaded herself that Lord Byron meant to leave Allegra at Bagnacavallo, in the event of his own departure from Italy. We know now from his letters that it was his settled purpose to take her with him, wherever he went. Even when he meditated – briefly – an exile to South America, the child was to accompany his flight. But his persistent silence; his maddening refusal to answer Claire's appeals

or remonstrances, left her in painful ignorance, and a prey to consuming fears. She conceived the mad design of stealing Allegra from the convent, – a scheme which was warmly supported by those discreet monitors, Lady Mountcashell and Mr. Tighe. Together they discussed ways and means. Mr. Tighe was of the opinion that the time had come for extreme measures; and the ardent Miss Parker assured Miss Clairmont that, were *she* Allegra's mother, she would not hesitate to stab Lord Byron to the heart, and so free his unhappy offspring from captivity.

In the midst of this melodramatic turmoil we hear Mrs. Shelley's voice, pleading vainly for patience and common sense. She points out in an earnest letter to Claire that Lady Noel's death will probably compel Byron to go to England, and may even lead to a reconciliation with his wife. In that event he will be more willing to give back Allegra to her mother; and for the present, there is no cause for apprehension. "Your anxiety about the child's health," she writes reassuringly, "is to a great extent unfounded. You ought to know, and any one will tell you, that the towns of Romagna, situated where Bagnacavallo is, enjoy the best air in Italy. Imola and the neighbouring *paese* are famous. Bagnacavallo especially, being fifteen miles from the sea, and situated on an eminence, is peculiarly salutary. Considering the affair reasonably, Allegra is well taken care of there. She is in good health, and in all probability will continue so."

One fact she strives to make clear. Her husband has no money for the furtherance of any plots that Miss Clairmont and Mr. Tighe may devise. On this score, Shelley himself is equally explicit. He had never wanted Allegra to go to her father, and he cannot resist the

temptation of saying, "I told you so," though he says it with grave kindness. But he was even less willing that, having been given up, she should be stolen back again. His letter of remonstrance proves both the anxiety he felt, and his sense of shame at the part he was expected to play.

My Dear Clare, – I know not what to think of the state of your mind, nor what to fear for you. Your plan about Allegra seems to me, in its present form, pregnant with irremediable infamy to all the actors in it except yourself; – in any form wherein *I* must actively coöperate, with inevitable destruction. *I could not* refuse Lord Byron's challenge; though that, however to be deprecated, would be the least in the series of mischiefs consequent upon my intervention in such a plan. I am shocked at the thoughtless violence of your designs, and I wish to put my sense of their madness in the strongest light. I may console myself, however, with the reflection that the attempt even is impossible, as I have no money. So far from being ready to lend me three or four hundred pounds, Horace Smith has lately declined to advance six or seven napoleons for a musical instrument which I wished to buy for Jane Williams in Paris. Nor have I any other friends to whom I could apply.

There was no need of heroics on the one side, nor of apprehension on the other. While Miss Clairmont was fretting and scheming in Florence, fever was scourging the Romagna, so seldom visited by infection, and the little English-born girl fell one of its earliest victims. Allegra died at her convent school in the spring of 1822.

Byron admitted that death was kind. "Her position in the world would scarcely have allowed her to be happy," he said, pitying remorsefully the "sinless child of sin," so harshly handicapped in life. But he felt his loss, and bitterly, though silently, mourned it. The Countess Guiccioli was with him when the tidings came. In her eyes, he had always been a fond and solicitous father; yet the violence of his distress amazed and frightened her. He sent her away, and faced his grief, and his remorse – if he felt remorse – alone. The next day, when she sought him, he said very simply, "It is God's will. She is more fortunate than we are;" and never spoke of the child again. "From that time" she adds, "he became more anxious about his daughter Ada; – so much so as to disquiet himself when the usual accounts sent him were for a post or two delayed."

Byron's letters to Shelley, to Murray, and to Scott, bear witness to the sincerity of his grief, and also to his sense of compunction. He was still ready to defend his conduct; but to Shelley, at least, he admitted: "It is a moment when we are apt to think that, if this or that had been done, such an event might have been prevented." Indeed, of the four actors so deeply concerned in this brief tragedy of life, Shelley alone could hold himself free from blame. From first to last he had been generous, reasonable, and kind. It was his painful part to comfort Miss Clairmont, to restrain her frenzy of anger and wretchedness, to make what shadow of peace he could between the parents of the dead child. In all this he endured more than his share of worry and vexation. Two weeks after Allegra's death, he wrote to Lord Byron:

"I have succeeded in dissuading Clare from the melancholy design of visiting the coffin at Leghorn, much to the profit of my own shattered health and spirits, which would have suffered greatly in accompanying her on such a journey. She is much better. She has, indeed, altogether suffered in a manner less terrible than I expected, after the first shock, during which, of course, she wrote the letter you enclose. I had no idea that her letter was written in that temper; and I think I need not assure you that, whatever mine or Mary's ideas might have been respecting the system of education you intended to adopt, we sympathize too much in your loss, and appreciate too well your feelings, to have allowed such a letter to be sent to you, had we suspected its contents."

A dead grief is easier to bear than a live trouble. By early summer, Shelley was able to report Miss Clairmont as once more "talkative and vivacious." It was he who befriended her to the end, and who bequeathed her a large share of his estate. It was he who saw – or deemed he saw – the image of Allegra rise smiling and beckoning from the sea.

According to the Countess Guiccioli, Byron bore the "profound sorrow" occasioned by his little daughter's death "with all the fortitude belonging to his great soul." In reality his sense of loss was tempered by relief. Allegra's future had always been to him a subject of anxiety, and it was not without an emotion of joy that he realized the child's escape from a world which he had found bad, and which he had done little to make better. Two days after she died, he wrote to Murray: "You will regret to hear that I have received intelligence of the death of my daughter, Allegra, of a fever, in the convent of

Bagnacavallo, where she was placed for the last year to commence her education. It is a heavy blow for many reasons, but must be borne, – with time."

A fortnight later he wrote to Scott: "I have just lost my natural daughter, Allegra, by a fever. The only consolation, save time, is the reflection that she is either at rest or happy; for her few years (only five) prevented her from having incurred any sin, except what we inherit from Adam.

'Whom the gods love die young.'"

In a third letter, published by Mr. Prothero, Byron repeats these sentiments with even greater emphasis, and with a keener appreciation of their value. "Death has done his work, and I am resigned.... Even at my age I have become so much worn and harassed by the trials of the world, that I cannot refrain from looking upon that early rest which is at times granted to the young, as a blessing. There is a purity and holiness in the apotheosis of those who leave us in their brightness and their beauty, which instinctively lead us to a persuasion of their beatitude."

It was the irony of fate that, after being an innocent object of contention all her life, Allegra should, even in death, have been made the theme of an angry and bitter dispute. Her body was sent to England, and Byron begged Murray to make all the necessary arrangements for her burial. His directions were exceedingly minute. He indicated the precise spot in Harrow Church where he wished the child interred, and he wrote the inscription to be engraved upon her tablet.

Allegra

in memory of
allegra,
daughter of g. g. lord byron,
who died at bagnacavallo,
in italy, april 20th, 1822,
aged five years and three months.

I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me.
2 Samuel, xii. 23.

The funeral he desired to be "as private as is consistent with decency;" and he expressed a hope that his friend, the Rev. Henry Drury, would read the church service.

Murray found himself beset by unexpected difficulties. The vicar of Harrow, the Rev. J. W. Cunningham, objected strenuously to the erection of Allegra's tablet, and stated his objections at length; – not to Lord Byron (which was prudent), but to the unhappy publisher, who, all his life, had everybody's business to attend to. Mr. Cunningham declared that the proposed inscription "would be felt by every man of refined taste, to say nothing of sound morals, to be an offence against taste and propriety." He explained cautiously that, as he did not dare to say this to Byron, he expected Murray to do so. "My correspondence with his Lordship has been so small that I can scarcely venture myself to urge these objections. You, perhaps, will feel no such scruple. I have seen no person who did not concur in the propriety of stating them. I would intreat, however, that, should you think it right to introduce my name into any statement made to Lord Byron" (as if it could well have been left out), "you will not do so without assuring him of

my unwillingness to oppose the smallest obstacle to his wishes, or give the slightest pain to his mind. The injury which, in my judgment, he is from day to day inflicting upon society is no justification for measures of retaliation and unkindness."

Even the expansive generosity of this last sentiment failed to soften Byron's wrath, when the vicar's scruples were communicated to him. He anathematized the reverend gentleman in language too vigorous for repetition, and he demanded of Murray, "what was the matter with the inscription," – apparently under the impression that he had mistaken his dates, or misquoted his text. His anger deepened into fury when he was subsequently informed that Allegra's interment in Harrow Church was held to be a deliberate insult to Lady Byron, who occasionally attended the services there. He wrote passionately that of his wife's church-goings he knew nothing; but that, had he known, no power would have induced him to bury his poor infant where her foot might tread upon its grave. Meanwhile, Mr. Cunningham had marshalled his church-wardens, who obediently withheld their consent to the erection of the tablet; so that matter was settled forever. Two years later, Dr. Ireland, Dean of Westminster, refused to permit Lord Byron's body to be buried in Westminster Abbey. Even Thorwaldsen's statue of the poet, now in Trinity College, Cambridge, was rejected by this conscientious dignitary. "I do indeed greatly wish for a figure by Thorwaldsen here," he wrote piously to Murray; "but no taste ought to be indulged to the prejudice of a duty." The statue lay unheeded for months in a shed on the Thames wharf, and was finally transferred to the library of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Comment is superfluous. Byron was denied a grave in Westminster Abbey; but Gifford, through Dr. Ireland's especial insistence, was buried within its walls.

Allegra lies in Harrow Church, with no tablet to mark her resting-place, or to preserve her memory. Visitors searching sentimentally for "Byron's tomb," – by which they mean a stone in the churchyard, "on the brow of the hill, looking towards Windsor," where, as a boy, he was wont to sit and dream for hours, – seldom know the spot where his little daughter sleeps.