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ENGLISH ESSAYS
OF
TODAY

Selected and Edited

BY

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PREFACE

During the past half century the position of the English language in the world has changed considerably. Outside India English has become a world language, indispensable for many purposes in life; in India itself English has ceased to be the language of our rulers. These changes demand a re-examination of the aims and objectives of teaching the English language, and especially its literature, in our schools and colleges.

Should we continue, in our educational institutions, to emphasise the great writers of English prose and poetry of an earlier day, or should we give greater prominence to the more modern writers of the twentieth century? This question needs consideration. While nobody will deny the abiding value of the great masterpieces of English literature, still the kind of literature which we want to place before the young people of this country will depend upon the kind of English which we want them to learn. Even before the advent of Independence it had been felt that the English which the educated youth of India ought to learn is the English of the cultured Englishmen of today.

In an earlier day, before the latest inventions of mankind had quickened the tempo of life, people in Britain as elsewhere, did things in a leisurely manner, and this is naturally reflected in the manner of their writing. But today with the changed conditions of life has come a new way of writing,—simple, forceful and terse. With special reference to essays, it may be said that if Bacon, Addison, and Steele, Lamb and Goldsmith, Hazlitt and Stevenson are outstanding representatives of earlier modes of writing, the authors included in this book are among the best essayists of our own time.

The word *Essay* has been used in the past in a loose sense to indicate many kinds of writing, including lengthy philosophical or other disquisitions and even pieces of poetry. But

in more recent times certain essential attributes of the English prose essay have been generally recognized. It is now agreed that the essay has a certain length (within somewhat wide limits), form, finish, lightness of treatment, intimate personal touch of the author, etc. In the present collection only those essays which conform to this idea are included. Nothing that had not been originally composed as an essay in this sense, and nothing which is merely a portion of a longer piece of literary composition is included here. Finally, in making the selection care has been taken to see that the subject matter of the essays has a broad universal appeal so that unfamiliarity of subject matter may not stand in the way of Indian students appreciating the essays.

D. S. GORDON

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A. G. GARDINER

I. ON CHOOSING A NAME

“As for your name, I offer you the whole firmament to choose from.” In that prodigal spirit the editor of the *Star* invites me to join the constellation that he has summoned from the vasty deeps of Fleet Street. I am, he says, to shine punctually every Wednesday evening, wet or fine, on winter nights and summer eves, at home or abroad, until such time as he cries: “Hold, enough!” and applies the extinguisher that comes to all.

The invitation reaches me in a tiny village on a spur of a range of beech clad hills, whither I have fled for a breathing space from the nightmare of the war and the menacing gloom of the London streets at night. Here the darkness has no terrors. In the wide arch of the sky our lamps are lit nightly as the sun sinks down far over the great plain that stretches at our feet. None of the palpitations of Fleet Street disturb us, and the rumours of the war come to us like far-off echoes from another world. The only sensation of our day is when, just after darkness has fallen, the sound of a whistle in the tiny street of thatched cottages announces that the postman has called to collect letters.

In this solitude, where one is thrown entirely upon one's own resources, one discovers how dependent one is upon men and books for inspiration. It is hard even to find a name. Not that finding a name is easy in any circumstances. Every one who lives by his pen knows the difficulty of the task. I would rather write an article than find a title for it. The thousand words come easily (sometimes); but the five-words summary of the thousand, that is to flame at the top like a beacon light, is a gem that has to be sought in travail, almost in tears. I have written books, but I have never found a title for one that I have written. That has always come to me from a friend.

Even the men of genius suffer from this impoverishment. When Goldsmith had written the finest English comedy since Shakespeare he did not know what to call it, and had to leave Johnson to write the label. I like to think that Shakespeare himself suffered from this sterility—that he, too, sat biting the feather of his quill in that condition of despair that is so familiar to smaller men. Indeed, we have proof that it was so in the titles themselves. Is not the title, *As You Like It*, a confession that he had bitten his quill until he was tired of the vain search for a name? And what is *Twelfth Night: or What You Will* but an evidence that he could not hit upon any name that would fit the most joyous offspring of his genius?

What parent does not know the same agony? To name a child, to give him a sign that shall go with him to his grave, and that shall fit that mystery of the cradle which time and temptation and trial shall alone reveal—*hoc opus, hic labor est*. Many fail by starting from false grounds—fashion, ambition, or momentary interest. Perhaps the little stranger arrives with the news of a battle, or when a popular novel appears, or at a moment when you are under the influence of some austere or heroic name. And forgetful that it is the child that has to bear the burden of your momentary impulse, you call him Inkerman Jones, or Kitchener Smith, or Milton Spinks.

And so he is started on his journey, like a little historical memory, or challenging comparison with some hero of fact or fable. Perhaps Milton Spinks grows up bow-legged and commonplace—all Spinks and no Milton. As plain John he would pass through life happy and unnoticed, but the great name of Milton hangs about him like a jest from which he can never escape—no, not even in the grave, for it will be continued there until the lichen has covered the name on the headstone with stealthy and kindly oblivion.

It is a good rule, I think, to avoid the fanciful in names. So few of our children are going to be heroes or sages that we should be careful not to stamp them with the mark of

greatness at the outset of the journey. Horatio was a happy stroke for Nelson, but how few Horatios win immortality, or deserve it! And how disastrous if Horatio turns out a knave and a coward! If young Spinks has any Miltonic fire within him, it will shine through plain John more naturally and lustreously than through any borrowed patronymic. You may be as humble as you like, and John will fit you: as illustrious as you like, and John will blaze as splendid as your deeds, linking you with that great order of nobility of which John Milton, John Hampden, and John Bright are types.

I had written thus far when it occurred to me that I had still my own name to choose and that soon the whistle of the postman would be heard in the street. I went out into the orchard to take counsel with the stars. The far horizon was still stained wine-red with the last embers of the day; northward over the shoulder of the hill the yellow moon was rising full-orbed into the night sky and the firmament glittered with a thousand lamps.

How near and familiar they seem to one in the solitude of the country! In the town our vision is limited to the street. We see only the lights of the pavement and hear only the rattle of the unceasing traffic. The stars seem infinitely removed from our life.

But here they are like old neighbours for whom we never look in vain, intimate though eternal, friendly and companionable though far off. There is Orion coming over the hill, and there the many-jewelled Pleiades, and across the great central dome of the sky the vast triangle formed by the Pole Star, golden Arcturus (not now visible), and ice-blue Vega. But these are not names for me. Better are those homely sounds that link the pageant of night with the immemorial life of the fields. Arcturus is Alpha of the Herdsman. Shall it be that?

And then my eye roves westward to where the Great Bear hangs head downwards as if to devour the earth. Great Bear, Charles's Wain, the Plough, the Dipper, the Chariot of

David—with what fancies the human mind through all the ages has played with that glorious constellation! Let my fancy play with it too. There at the head of the Plough flames the great star that points to the pole. I will hitch my little waggon to that sublime image. I will be Alpha of the Plough.

2. ON CATS AND DOGS

A friend of mine calling to see me the other day and observing my faithful Airedale—"Quilp" by name—whose tail was in a state of violent emotion at the prospect of a walk, remarked that when the new taxes came in I should have to pay a guinea for the privilege of keeping that dog. I said I hoped that Mr. McKenna would do nothing so foolish. In fact, I said, I am sure he will do nothing so foolish. I know him well, and I have always found him a sensible man. Let him, said I, tax us all fairly according to our incomes, but why should he interfere with the way in which we spend the money that he leaves us? Why should he deny the friendship of that most friendly animal the dog to a poor man and make it the exclusive possession of the well-to-do?

The emotion of Quilp's tail kept pace with the fervour of my remarks. He knew that he was the subject of the conversation, and his large brown eyes gleamed with intelligence, and his expressive eyebrows were eloquent of self-pity and appeal. He was satisfied that whatever the issue I was on his side, and at half a hint he would have given my friend a taste of the rough side of his tongue. But he is a well-mannered brute, and knows how to restrain his feelings in company.

What would be the result of your high tax? I continued with passion. It would be a blow at the democracy of dogs. It would reduce the whole of dogdom to a pampered class of degenerates. Is there anything more odious than the spectacle of a fat woman in furs nursing a lap dog in furs, too? It is as degrading to the noble family of dogs as a footman in gold buttons and gold braid is to the human family. But it is just these degenerates whom a high tax would protect. Honest fellows like Quilp here (more triumphant tail flourishes), dogs that love you like a brother, that will run for you, carry for you, bark for you, whose candour is so transparent and whose faithfulness has been the theme of countless poets—dogs like these would be taxed out of existence.

Now cats, I continued—(at the thrilling word Quilp became tense with excitement), cats are another affair. Personally I don't care two pence if Mr. McKenna taxes them a guinea a whisker: There is only one moment in the life of a cat that is tolerable, and that is when it is not a cat but a kitten. Who was the Frenchman who said that women ought to be born at seventeen and die at thirty? Cats ought to die when they cease to be kittens and become cats.

Cats, said my friend coldly, are the spiritual superiors of dogs. The dog is a flunkey, a serf, and underling, a creature that is eternally watching its master. Look at Quilp at this moment. What a spectacle of servility. You don't see cats making themselves the slaves of men. They like to be stroked but they have no affection for the hand that strokes them. They are not parasites, but independent souls, going their own way, living their own lives, indifferent to applause, calling no man master. That is why the French consider them so superior to dogs.

I do not care what the French think, I said with warmth.

But they are our Allies, said my friend severely. The Germans on the other hand, prefer dogs. I hope you are not a pro-German.

On the cat-and-dog issue I am, and don't care who knows it, I said recklessly. And I hate these attempts to drag in prejudice. Moreover, I would beg you to observe that it was a great Frenchman, none other than Pascal, who paid the highest of all tributes to the dog. "The more I see of men," he said, "the better I like dogs." I challenge you to produce from any French source such an encomium on the cat.

No, I continued, the dog is a generous, warm-hearted, chivalrous fellow, who will play with you, mourn for you, or die for you. Why, literature is full of his heroism. Who has climbed Helvellyn without being haunted by that shepherd's dog that inspired Scott and Byron? Or the Pass of St. Bernard without remembering the faithful hounds of the great monastery? But the cat is a secret and alien creature,

selfish and mysterious, a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. See her purring on the hearth-rug in front of the fire, and she seems the picture of innocence and guileless content. All a blind, my dear fellow, all a blind. Wait till night comes. Then where is demure Mistress Puss? Is she at home keeping vigil with the good dog Tray? No, the house may be in blazes or ransacked by burglars for all she cares. She is out on the tiles and in back gardens pursuing her unholy ritual—that strange ritual that seems so Oriental, so sinister, so full of devilish purpose. I can understand the old association of witchcraft with cats. The sight of cats almost makes me believe in witchcraft, in spite of myself. I can believe anything about a cat. *She is heartless and mercenary. Her name has become the synonym of everything that is mean, spiteful, and vicious. “An old cat” is the unkindest thing you can say about a woman.

But the dog wears his heart on his sleeve. His life is as open as the day. He has his indecorums, but he has no secrets. You may see the worst of him at a glance, but the best of him is inexhaustible. A cat is as remote from your life as a lizard, but a dog is as intimate as your own thoughts or your own shadow, and his loyalty is one of the consolations of a disloyal world. You remember that remark of Charles Reade’s: “He was only a man but he was as faithful as a dog.” It was the highest tribute he could pay to his hero—that he was as faithful as a dog. And think of his services—see him drawing his cart in Belgium, rounding up the sheep into the fold on the Yorkshire fells, tending the cattle by highway, warning off the night prowler from the lonely homestead, always alert, always obedient, always the friend of man, be he never so friendless. . . . Shall we go for a walk?

At the joyous word Quilp leapt on me with a frenzied demonstration. “Good Dog,” I said. “If Mr. McKenna puts a guinea tax on you I’ll never say a good word for him again.”

3. ON UMBRELLA MORALS

A sharp shower came on as I walked along the Strand, but I did not put up my umbrella. The truth is I couldn't put up my umbrella. The frame would not work for one thing, and if it had worked, I would not have put the thing up, for I would no more be seen under such a travesty of an umbrella than Falstaff would be seen marching through Coventry with his regiment of ragamuffins. The fact is, the umbrella is not my umbrella at all. It is the umbrella of some person who I hope will read these lines. He has got my silk umbrella. I have got the cotton one he left in exchange. I imagine him flaunting along the Strand under my umbrella, and throwing a scornful glance at the fellow who was carrying his abomination and getting wet into the bargain. I daresay the rascal chuckled as he eyed the said abomination. "Ah," he said gaily to himself, "I did you in that time, old boy. I know that thing. It won't open for nuts. And it folds up like a sack. Now, this umbrella. . . ."

But I leave him to his unrighteous communings. He is one of those people who have what I may call an umbrella conscience. You know the sort of person I mean. He would never put his hand in another's pocket, or forge a cheque or rob a till—not even if he had the chance. But he will swop umbrellas, or forget to return a book, or take a rise out of the railway company. In fact he is a thoroughly honest man who allows his honesty the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps he takes your umbrella at random from the barber's stand. He knows he can't get a worse one than his own. He may get a better. He doesn't look at it very closely until he is well on his way. Then, "Dear me! I've taken the wrong umbrella," he says, with an air of surprise, for he likes really to feel that he has made a mistake. "Ah, well, it's no use going back now. He'd be gone. *And I've left him mine!*"

It is thus that we play hide-and-seek with our own conscience. It is not enough not to be found out by others; we

refuse to be found out by ourselves. Quite impeccable people, people who ordinarily seem unspotted from the world, are afflicted with umbrella morals. It was a well-known preacher who was found dead in a first-class railway carriage with a third-class ticket in his pocket.

And as for books, who has any morals where they are concerned? I remember some years ago the library of a famous divine and literary critic, who had died, being sold. It was a splendid library of rare books, chiefly concerned with seventeenth century writers, about whom he was a distinguished authority. Multitudes of the books had the marks of libraries all over the country. He had borrowed them and never found a convenient opportunity of returning them. They clung to him like precedents to law. Yet he was a holy man and preached admirable sermons, as I can bear witness. And, if you press me on the point, I shall have to own that it is hard to part with a book you have come to love.

Indeed, the only sound rule about books is that adopted by the man who was asked by a friend to lend him a certain volume. "I'm sorry," he said, "but I can't." "Haven't you got it?" asked the other. "Yes, I've got it," he said, "but I make it a rule never to lend books. You see, nobody ever returns them. I know it is so from my own experience. Here, come with me." And he led the way to his library. "There," said he, "four thousand volumes. Every-one-of-'em-borrowed." No, never lend books. You can't trust your dearest friend there. I know. Where is that *Gil Blas* gone? Eh? And that *Silvio Pellico*? And . . . But why continue the list . . . He knows. HE KNOWS.

And hats. There are people who will exchange hats. Now that is unpardonable. That goes outside that dim borderland of conscience where honesty and dishonesty dissemble. No one can put a strange hat on without being aware of the fact. Yet it is done. I once hung a silk hat up in the smoking-room of the House of Commons. When I wanted it, it was gone. And there was no silk hat left in its place.

I had to go out bareheaded through Palace Yard and Whitehall to buy another. I have often wondered who was the gentleman who put my hat on and carried his own in his hand. Was he a Tory? Was he a Radical? It can't have been a Labour man, for no Labour man could put a silk hat on in a moment of abstraction. The thing would scorch his brow. Fancy Will Crooks in a silk hat! One would as soon dare to play with the fancy of the Archbishop of Canterbury in a bowler—a thought which seems almost impious.

It is possible, of course, that the gentleman who took my silk umbrella did really make a mistake. Perhaps if he knew the owner he would return it with his compliments. The thing has been done. Let me give an illustration. I have myself exchanged umbrellas—often. I hope I have done it honestly, but one can never be quite sure. Indeed, now I come to think of it, that silk umbrella itself was not mine. It was one of a long series of exchanges in which I had sometimes gained and sometimes lost. My most memorable exchange was at a rich man's house where I had been invited to dine with some politicians. It was summer-time, and the weather being dry I had not occasion for some days afterwards to carry an umbrella. Then one day a sensation reigned in our household. There had been discovered in the umbrella-stand an umbrella with a gold band and a gold tassel, and the name of a certain statesman engraved upon it. There had never been such a super-umbrella in our house before. Before its golden splendours we were at once humbled and terrified—humbled by its magnificence, terrified by its presence. I felt as though I had been caught in the act of stealing the British Empire. I wrote a hasty letter to the owner, told him I admired his politics, but had never hoped to steal his umbrella; then hailed a cab, and took the umbrella and the note to the nearest dispatch office.

He was very nice about it, and in returning my own umbrella took all the blame on himself. "What," he said, "between the noble-looking gentleman who thrust a hat on

my head and the second noble-looking gentleman who handed me a coat, and the third noble-looking gentleman who put an umbrella in my hand, and the fourth noble-looking gentleman who flung me into a carriage, I hadn't the least idea what I was taking. I was too bewildered by all the noble flunkeys to refuse anything that was offered me."

Be it observed, it was the name on the umbrella that saved the situation in this case. That is the way to circumvent the man with an umbrella conscience. I see him eyeing his exchange with a secret joy; then he observes the name and address and his solemn conviction that he is an honest man does the rest. After my experience today, I think I will engrave my name on my umbrella. But not on that baggy thing standing in the corner. I do not care who relieves me of that. It is anybody's for the taking.

4. ON HABITS

I sat down to write an article this morning, but found I could make no progress. There was grit in the machine somewhere, and the wheels refused to revolve. I was writing with a pen—a new fountain pen that someone had been good enough to send me, in commemoration of an anniversary, my interest in which is now very slight, but of which one or two well-meaning friends are still in the habit of reminding me. It was an excellent pen, broad, and free in its paces, and capable of a most satisfying flourish. It was a pen, you would have said, that could have written an article about anything. You had only to fill it with ink and give it its head, and it would gallop away to its journey's end without a pause. That is how I felt about it when I sat down. But instead of galloping, the thing was as obstinate as a mule. I could get no more speed out of it than Stevenson could get out of his donkey in the Cevennes. I tried coaxing and I tried the bastinado, equally without effect on my Modestine.

Then it occurred to me that I was in conflict with a habit. It is my practice to do my writing with a pencil. Days, even weeks, pass without my using a pen for anything more than signing my name. On the other hand there are not many hours of the day when I am without a pencil between thumb and finger. It has become a part of my organism, as it were, a mere extension of my hand. There, at the top of my second finger, is a little bump, raised in its service, a monument erected by the friction of a whole forest of pencils that I have worn to the stump. A pencil is to me what his sword was to D'Artagnan, or his umbrella was to the Duke of Cambridge, or his cheroot was to Grant, or whittling a stick was to Jackson, or—in short, what any habit is to anybody. Put a pencil in my hand, seat me before a blank writing pad in an empty room, and I am, as they say of the children, as good as gold. I tick on as tranquilly as an eight-day clock. I may be dismissed from the mind, ignored, forgotten. But the magic wand must be

a pencil. Here was I sitting with a pen in my hand, and the whole complex of habit was disturbed. I was in an atmosphere of strangeness. The pen kept intruding between me and my thoughts. It was unfamiliar to the touch. It seemed to write a foreign language in which nothing pleased me.

This tyranny of little habits which is familiar to all of us is nowhere better described than in the story which Sir Walter Scott told to Rogers of his school days. "There was," he said, "a boy in my class at school who stood always at the top, nor could I with all my efforts supplant him. Day came after day and still he kept his place, do what I would; till at length I observed that, when a question was asked him, he always fumbled with his fingers at a particular button in the lower part of his waistcoat. To remove it, therefore, became expedient in my eye, and in an evil moment it was removed with a knife. Great was my anxiety to know the success of my measure; and it succeeded too well. When the boy was again questioned his fingers sought again for the button, but it was not to be found. In his distress he looked down for it—it was to be seen no more than to be felt. He stood confounded, and I took possession of his place; nor did he ever recover it, or ever, I believe, suspect who was the author of his wrong. Often in after-life has the sight of him smote me as I passed by him, and often have I resolved to make him some reparation; but it ended in good resolutions. Though I never renewed my acquaintance with him, I often saw him, for he filled some inferior office in one of the courts of law at Edinburgh. Poor fellow! I believe he is dead; he took early to drinking."

It was rather a shabby trick of young Scott's, and all one can say in regard to its unhappy consequences is that a boy so delicately balanced and so permanently undermined by a trifle would in any case have come to grief in this rough world. There is no harm in cultivating habits, so long as they are not injurious habits. Indeed, most of us are little more than bundles of habits neatly done up in coat and

trousers. Take away our habits and the residuum would hardly be worth bothering about. We could not get on without them. They simplify the mechanism of life. They enable us to do a multitude of things automatically which, if we had to give fresh and original thought to them each time, would make existence an impossible confusion. The more we can regularise our commonplace activities by habit, the smoother our path and the more leisure we command. To take a simple case. I belong to a club, large but not so large as to necessitate attendants in the cloakroom. You hang up your own hat and coat and take them down when you want them. For a long time it was my practice to hang them anywhere where there was a vacant hook and to take no note of the place. When I sought them I found it absurdly difficult to find them in the midst of so many similar hats and coats. Memory did not help me, for memory refused to burden itself with such trumpery things, and so daily after lunch I might be seen wandering forlornly and vacuously between the rows and rows of clothes in search of my own garments, murmuring, "Where *did* I put my hat?" Then one day a brilliant inspiration seized me. I would always hang my coat and hat on a certain peg, or if that were occupied, on the vacant peg nearest to it. It needed a few days to form the habit, but once formed it worked like a charm. I can find my hat and coat without thinking about finding them. I go to them as unerringly as a bird to its nest, or an arrow to its mark. It is one of the unequivocal triumphs of my life.

But habits should be a stick that we use, not a crutch to lean on. We ought to make them for our convenience or enjoyment and occasionally break them to assert our independence. We ought to be able to employ them, without being discomposed when we cannot employ them. I once saw Mr. Balfour so discomposed, like Scott's school rival, by a trivial breach of habit. Dressed, I think, in the uniform of an Elder Brother of Trinity House he was proposing a toast at a dinner at the Mansion House. It is his custom in

speaking to hold the lapels of his coat. It is the most comfortable habit in speaking, unless you want to fling your arms about in a rhetorical fashion. It keeps your hands out of mischief and the body in repose. But the uniform Mr. Balfour was wearing had no lapels, and when the hands went up in search of them they wandered about pathetically like a couple of children who had lost their parents on Blackpool sands. They fingered the buttons in nervous distraction, clung to each other in a visible access of grief, broke asunder and resumed the search for the lost lapels, travelled behind his back, fumbled with the glasses on the table, sought again for the lapels, did everything but take refuge in the pockets of the trousers. It was a characteristic omission. Mr. Balfour is too practised a speaker to come to disaster as the boy in Scott's story did; but his discomfiture was apparent. He struggled manfully through his speech, but all the time it was obvious that he was at a loss what to do with his hands, having no lapels on which to hang them.

I happily had a remedy for my disquietude. I put up my pen, took out a pencil, and, launched once more into the comfortable rut of habit, ticked away peacefully like the eight-day clock. And this is the (I hope) pardonable result.

5. ON DINING

There are people who can hoard a secret as misers hoard gold. They can hoard it not for the sake of the secret, but for the love of secrecy, for the satisfaction of feeling that they have got something locked up that they could spend if they chose without being any the poorer and that other people would enjoy knowing. Their pleasure is in not spending what they can afford to spend. It is a pleasure akin to the economy of the Scotsman, which, according to a distinguished member of that race, finds its perfect expression in taking the tube when you can afford a cab. But the gift of secrecy is rare. Most of us enjoy secrets for the sake of telling them. We spend our secrets as Lamb's spendthrift spent his money—while they are fresh. The joy of creating an emotion in other people is too much for us. We like to surprise them, or shock them, or please them as the case may be, and we give away the secret with which we have been entrusted with a liberal hand and a solemn request "to say nothing about it." We relish the luxury of telling the secret, and leave the painful duty of keeping it to the other fellow. We let the horse out and then solemnly demand that the stable door shall be shut so that it shan't escape.

I have done it myself—often. I have no doubt that I shall do it again. But not today. I have a secret to reveal, but I shall not reveal it. I shall not reveal it for entirely selfish reasons, which will appear later. You may conceive me going about choking with mystery. The fact is that I have made a discovery. Long years have I spent in the search for the perfect restaurant, where one can dine wisely and well, where the food is good, the service plain, the atmosphere restful, and the prices moderate—in short, the happy mean between the giddy heights of the Ritz or the Carlton, and the uncompromising cheapness of Lockhart's. In those extremes I find no satisfaction.

It is not merely the dearness of the Ritz that I reject. I dislike its ostentatious and elaborate luxury. It is not that I am indifferent to a good table. Mrs. Poyser was thankful

to say that there weren't many families that enjoyed their "vittles" more than hers did, and I can claim the same modest talent for myself. I am not ashamed to say that I count good eating as one of the chief joys of this transitory life. I could join very heartily in Peacock's chorus:

How can a man, in his life of a span,
Do anything better than dine?

Give me a satisfactory dinner, and the perplexities of things unravel themselves magically, the clouds break, and a benign calm overspreads the landscape. I would not go so far as the eminent professor, who insisted that eating was the greatest of all the pleasures in life. That, I think, is exalting the stomach unduly. And I can conceive few things more revolting than the Roman practice of prolonging a meal by taking emetics. But, on the other hand, there is no need to apologise for enjoying a good dinner. Quite virtuous people have enjoyed good dinners. I see no necessary antagonism between a healthy stomach and a holy mind. There was a saintly man once in this city—a famous man, too—who was afflicted with so hearty an appetite that, before going out to dinner, he had a square meal to take the edge off his hunger, and to enable him to start even with the other guests. And it is on record that when the ascetic converts of the Oxford Movement went to lunch with Cardinal Wiseman in Lent they were shocked at the number of fish courses that hearty trencherman and eminent Christian went through in a season of fasting. "I fear," said one of them, "that there is a lobster salad side to the Cardinal." I confess, without shame, to a lobster salad side too. A hot day and a lobster salad—what happier conjunction can we look for in a plaguy world?

But, in making this confession, I am neither gourmand nor gourmet. Extravagant dinners bore me and offend what I may call my economic conscience; I have little sense of the higher poetry of the kitchen, and the great language of the menu does not stir my pulse. I do not ask for lyrics at

the table. I want good, honest prose. I think that Hazlitt would have found me no unfit comrade on a journey. He had no passion for talk when afoot, but he admitted that there was one subject which it was pleasant to discuss on a journey, and that was what one should have for supper at the inn. It is a fertile topic that grows in grace as the shadows lengthen and the limbs wax weary. And Hazlitt had the right spirit. His mind dwelt upon plain dishes—eggs and a rasher, a rabbit smothered in onions, or an excellent veal cutlet. He even spoke approvingly of Sancho's choice of a cow-heel. I do not go all the way with him in his preferences. I should argue with him fiercely against his rabbit and onions. I should put the case for steak and onions with conviction, and I hope with convincing eloquence. But the root of the matter was in him. He loved plain food plainly served, and I am proud to follow his banner. And it is because I have found my heart's desire at the Mermaid, that I go about burdened with an agreeable secret. I feel when I enter its portals a certain sober harmony and repose of things. I stroke the noble cat that waits me, seated on the banister, and rises, purring with dignity, under my caress. I say "Good evening" to the landlord, who greets me with a fine eighteenth-century bow, at once cordial and restrained, and waves me to a seat with a grave motion of his hand. No frowsy waiter in greasy swallow-tail descends on me; but a neat-handed Phyllis, not too old nor yet too young, in sober black dress and white cuffs, attends my wants, with just that mixture of civility and aloofness that establishes the perfect relationship—obliging, but not familiar, quietly responsive to a sign, but not talkative. The napery makes you feel clean to look at it, and the cutlery shines like a mirror, and cuts like a Seville blade. And then with a nicely balanced dish of hors d'oeuvres or, in due season, a half-dozen oysters, the modest four-course table d'hote begins; and when at the end you light your cigarette over your cup of coffee, you feel that you have not only dined but that you have been in an atmosphere of plain refinement, touched with the subtle note of a personality.

And the bill? Sir, you would be surprised at its modesty. But I shall not tell you. Nor shall I tell you where you will find the Mermaid. It may be in Soho or off the Strand, or in the neighbourhood of Lincoln's Inn, or it may not be in any of these places. I shall not tell you because I sometimes fancy it is only a dream, and that if I tell it I shall shatter the illusion, and that one night I shall go into the Mermaid and find its old English note of kindly welcome and decorous moderation gone, and that in its place there will be a noisy, bustling, popular restaurant with a band, from which I shall flee. When it is "discovered" it will be lost, as the Rev. Mr. Spalding would say. And so I shall keep its secret. I only purr it to the cat, who arches her back and purrs understandingly in response. It is the bond of freemasonry between us.

G. K. CHESTERTON

I. ON LYING IN BED

Lying in bed would be an altogether perfect and supreme experience if only one had a coloured pencil long enough to draw on the ceiling. This, however, is not generally a part of the domestic apparatus on the premises. I think myself that the thing might be managed with several pails of Aspinall and a broom. Only if one worked in a really sweeping and masterly way, and laid on the colour in great washes, it might drip down again on one's face in floods of rich and mingled colour like some strange fairy rain; and that would have its disadvantages. I am afraid it would be necessary to stick to black and white in this form of artistic composition. To that purpose, indeed, the white ceiling would be of the greatest possible use; in fact it is the only use I think of a white ceiling being put to.

But for the beautiful experiment of lying in bed I might never have discovered it. For years I have been looking for blank spaces in a modern house to draw on. Paper is much too small for any really allegorical design; as *Cyrano de Bergerac* says: "*Il me faut des géants.*" But when I tried to find these fine clear spaces in the modern rooms such as we all live in I was continually disappointed. I found an endless pattern and complication of small objects hung like a curtain of fine links between me and my desire. I examined the walls; I found them to my surprise to be already covered with wall-paper, and I found the wall-paper to be already covered with very uninteresting images, all bearing a ridiculous resemblance to each other. I could not understand why one arbitrary symbol (a symbol apparently entirely devoid of any religious or philosophical significance) should thus be sprinkled all over my nice walls like a sort of small-pox. The Bible must be referring to wall-papers, I think, when it says "Use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles

do." I found the Turkey carpet a mass of unmeaning colours, rather like the Turkish Empire, or like the sweetmeat called Turkish delight. I do not exactly know what Turkish delight really is; but I suppose it is Macedonian Massacres. Everywhere that I went forlornly, with my pencil or my paint brush, I found that others had unaccountably been before me, spoiling the walls, the curtains, and the furniture with their childish and barbaric designs.

Nowhere did I find a really clear place for sketching until this occasion when I prolonged beyond the proper limit the process of lying on my back in bed. Then the light of that white heaven broke upon my vision, that breadth of mere white which is indeed almost the definition of Paradise, since it means purity and also means freedom. But alas! like all heavens, now that it is seen it is found to be unattainable; it looks more austere and more distant than the blue sky outside the window. For my proposal to paint on it with the bristly end of a broom has been discouraged—never mind by whom; by a person debarred from all political rights—and even my minor proposal to put the other end of the broom into the kitchen fire and turn it into charcoal has not been conceded. Yet I am certain that it was from persons in my position that all the original inspiration came for covering the ceilings of palaces and cathedrals with a riot of fallen angels or victorious gods. I am sure that it was only because Michael Angelo was engaged in the ancient and honourable occupation of lying in bed that he ever realised how the roof of the Sistine Chapel might be made into an awful imitation of a divine drama that could only be acted in the heavens.

The tone now commonly taken towards the practice of lying in bed is hypocritical and unhealthy. Of all the marks of modernity that seem to mean a kind of decadence, there is none more menacing and dangerous than the exaltation of very small and secondary matters of conduct at the expense of very great and primary ones, at the expense of eternal public and tragic human morality. If there is one thing

worse than the modern weakening of major morals it is the modern strengthening of minor morals. Thus it is considered more withering to accuse a man of bad taste than of bad ethics. Cleanliness is not next to godliness nowadays, for cleanliness is made an essential and godliness is regarded as an offence. A playwright can attack the institution of marriage so long as he does not misrepresent the manners of society, and I have met Ibsenite pessimists who thought it wrong to take beer but right to take prussic acid. Especially this is so in matters of hygiene; notably such matters as lying in bed. Instead of being regarded, as it ought to be, as a matter of personal convenience and adjustment, it has come to be regarded by many as if it were a part of essential morals to get up early in the morning. It is upon the whole part of practical wisdom; but there is nothing good about it or bad about its opposite.

Misers get up early in the morning; and burglars, I am informed, get up the night before. It is the great peril of our society that all its mechanism may grow more fixed while its spirit grows more fickle. A man's minor actions and arrangements ought to be free, flexible, creative; the things that should be unchangeable are his principles, his ideals. But with us the reverse is true; our views change constantly; but our lunch does not change. Now, I should like men to have strong and rooted conceptions, but as for their lunch, let them have it sometimes in the garden, sometimes in bed, sometimes on the roof, sometimes in the top of a tree. Let them argue from the same first principles but let them do it in a bed, or a boat, or a balloon. This alarming growth of good habits really means a too great emphasis on those virtues which mere custom can misuse, it means too little emphasis on those virtues which custom can never quite ensure, sudden and splendid virtues of inspired pity or of inspired candour. If ever that abrupt appeal is made to us we may fail. A man can get used to getting up at five o'clock in the morning. A man cannot very well get used to being burnt for his opinions; the first

experiment is commonly fatal. Let us pay a little more attention to these possibilities of the heroic and the unexpected. I daresay that when I get out of this bed I shall do some deed of an almost terrible virtue.

For those who study the great art of lying in bed there is one emphatic caution to be added. Even for those who can do their work in bed (like journalists), still more for those whose work cannot be done in bed (as, for example, the professional harpooner of whales), it is obvious that the indulgence must be very occasional. But that is not the caution I mean. The caution is this: if you do lie in bed, be sure you do it without any reason or justification at all. I do not speak, of course, of the seriously sick. But if a healthy man lies in bed, let him do it without a rag of excuse; then he will get up a healthy man. If he does it for some secondary hygienic reason, if he has some scientific explanation, he may get up a hypochondriac.

2. WHAT I FOUND IN MY POCKET

Once when I was very young I met one of those men who have made the Empire what it is—a man in an astracan coat, with an astracan moustache—a tight, black, curly moustache. Whether he put on the moustache with the coat or whether his Napoleonic will enabled him not only to grow a moustache in the usual place, but also to grow little moustaches all over his clothes, I do not know. I only remember that he said to me the following words: “A man can’t get on nowadays by hanging about with his hands in his pockets.” I made reply with the quite obvious flippancy that perhaps a man got on by having his hands in other people’s pockets; whereupon he began to argue about Moral Evolution, so I suppose what I said had some truth in it. But the incident now comes back to me, and connects itself with another incident—if you can call it an incident—which happened to me only the other day.

I have only once in my life picked a pocket, and then (perhaps through some absent-mindedness) I picked my own. My act can really with some reason be so described. For in taking things out of my own pocket I had at least one of the more tense and quivering emotions of the thief; I had a complete ignorance and a profound curiosity as to what I should find there. Perhaps it would be the exaggeration of eulogy to call me a tidy person. But I can always pretty satisfactorily account for all my possessions. I can always tell where they are, and what I have done with them, so long as I can keep them out of my pockets. If once anything slips into those unknown abysses, I wave it a sad Virgilian farewell. I suppose that the things that I have dropped into my pockets are still there; the same presumption applies to the things that I have dropped into the sea. But I regard the riches stored in both these bottomless chasms with the same reverent ignorance. They tell us that on the last day the sea will give up its dead; and I suppose that on the same occasion long strings of extraordinary things will come running out of my pockets. But I have quite forgotten what any of them are;

and there is really nothing (excepting the money) that I shall be at all surprised at finding among them.

Such at least has hitherto been my state of innocence. I here only wish briefly to recall the special, extraordinary, and hitherto unprecedented circumstances which led me in cold blood, and being of sound mind, to turn out my pockets. I was locked up in a third-class carriage for a rather long journey. The time was towards evening, but it might have been anything, for everything resembling earth or sky or light or shade was painted out as if with a great wet brush by an unshifting sheet of quite colourless rain. I had no books or newspapers. I had not even a pencil and a scrap of paper with which to write a religious epic. There were no advertisements on the walls of the carriage, otherwise I could have plunged into the study of them, for any collection of printed words is quite enough to suggest infinite complexities of mental ingenuity. When I find myself opposite the words "Sunlight Soap" I can exhaust all the aspects of Sun Worship, Apollo, and summer poetry before I go on to the less congenial subject of soap. But there was no printed word or picture anywhere; there was nothing but blank wood inside the carriage and blank wet without. Now I deny most energetically that anything is, or can be, uninteresting. So I stared at the joints of the walls and seats, and began thinking hard on the fascinating subject of wood. Just as I had begun to realise why, perhaps, it was that Christ was a carpenter, rather than a bricklayer, or a baker, or anything else, I suddenly started upright, and remembered my pockets. I was carrying about with me an unknown treasury. I had a British Museum and a South Kensington collection of unknown curios hung all over me in different places. I began to take the things out.

The first thing I came upon consisted of piles and heaps of Battersea tram tickets. There were enough to equip a paper chase. They shook down in showers like confetti. Primarily, of course they touched my patriotic emotions, and brought tears to my eyes; also they provided me with the

printed matter I required, for I found on the back of them some short but striking little scientific essays about some kind of pill. Comparatively speaking, in my then destitution, those tickets might be regarded as a small but well-chosen scientific library. Should my railway journey continue (which seemed likely at the time) for a few months longer, I could imagine myself throwing myself into the controversial aspects of the pill, composing replies and rejoinders pro and con upon the data furnished to me. But after all it was the symbolic quality of the tickets that moved me most. For as certainly as the cross of St. George means English patriotism, those scraps of paper meant all that municipal patriotism which is now, perhaps the greatest hope of England.

The next thing that I took out was a pocket-knife. A pocket-knife, I need hardly say, would require a thick book full of moral meditations all to itself. A knife typifies one of the most primary of those practical origins upon which as upon low, thick pillows all our human civilisation reposes. Metals, the mystery of the thing called iron and of the thing called steel, led me off half-dazed into a kind of dream. I saw into the intrails of dim, damp wood, where the first man among all the common stones found the strange stone. I saw a vague and violent battle, in which stone axes broke and stone knives were splintered against something shining and new in the hand of one desperate man. I heard all the hammers on all the anvils of the earth. I saw all the swords of Feudal and all the weals of Industrial War. For the knife is only a short sword; and the pocket-knife is a secret sword. I opened it and looked at that brilliant and terrible tongue which we call a blade; and I thought that perhaps it was the symbol of the oldest of the needs of man. The next moment I knew that I was wrong; for the thing that came next out of my pocket was a box of matches. Then I saw fire, which is stronger even than steel, the old, fierce female thing, the thing we all love, but dare not touch.

The next thing I found was a piece of chalk; and I saw in it all the art and all the frescoes of the world. The next

was a coin of a very modest value; and I saw in it not only the image and superscription of our own Caesar, but all government and order since the world began. But I have not space to say what were the items in the long and splendid procession of poetical symbols that came pouring out. I cannot tell you all the things that were in my pocket. I can tell you one thing, however, that I could not find in my pocket. I allude to my railway ticket.

3. ON RUNNING AFTER ONE'S HAT

I feel an almost savage envy on hearing that London has been flooded in my absence, while I am in the mere country. My own Battersea has been, I understand, particularly favoured as a meeting of the waters. Battersea was already, as I need hardly say, the most beautiful of human localities. Now that it has the additional splendour of great sheets of water, there must be something quite incomparable in the landscape (or waterscape) of my own romantic town. Battersea must be a vision of Venice. The boat that brought the meat from the butcher's must have shot along those lanes of rippling silver with the strange smoothness of the gondola. The greengrocer who brought cabbages to the corner of the Latchmere Road must have leant upon the oar with the unearthly grace of the gondolier. There is nothing so perfectly poetical as an island; and when a district is flooded it becomes an archipelago.

Some consider such romantic views of flood or fire slightly lacking in reality. But really this romantic view of such inconveniences is quite as practical as the other. The true optimist who sees in such things an opportunity for enjoyment is quite as logical and much more sensible than the ordinary "Indignant Ratepayer" who sees in them an opportunity for grumbling. Real pain, as in the case of being burnt at Smithfield or having a toothache, is a positive thing; it can be supported, but scarcely enjoyed. But, after all, our toothaches are the exception, and as for being burnt at Smithfield, it only happens to us at the very longest intervals. And most of the inconveniences that make men swear or women cry are really sentimental or imaginative inconveniences—things altogether of the mind. For instance, we often hear grown-up people complaining of having to hang about a railway station and wait for a train. Did you ever hear a small boy complain of having to hang about a railway station and wait for a train? No; for to him to be inside a railway station is to be inside a cavern of wonder and a palace of poetical pleasures. Because to him the red light

and the green light on the signal are like a new sun and a new moon. Because to him when the wooden arm of the signal falls down suddenly, it is as if a great king had thrown down his staff as a signal and started a shrieking tournament of trains. I myself am of little boys' habit in this matter. They also serve who only stand and wait for the two fifteen. Their meditations may be full of rich and fruitful things. Many of the most purple hours of my life have been passed at Clapham Junction, which is now, I suppose, under water. I have been there in many moods so fixed and mystical that the water might well have come up to my waist before I noticed it particularly. But in the case of all such annoyances, as I have said, everything depends upon the emotional point of view. You can safely apply the test to almost every one of the things that are currently talked of as the typical nuisance of daily life.

For instance, there is a current impression that it is unpleasant to have to run after one's hat. Why should it be unpleasant to the well-ordered and pious mind? Not merely because it is running, and running exhausts one. The same people run much faster in games and sports. The same people run much more eagerly after an uninteresting little leather ball than they will after a nice silk hat. There is an idea that it is humiliating to run after one's hat; and when people say it is humiliating they mean that it is comic. It certainly is comic; but man is a very comic creature, and most of the things he does are comic—eating, for instance. And the most comic things of all are exactly the things that are most worth doing—such as making love. A man running after a hat is not half so ridiculous as a man running after a wife.

Now a man could, if he felt rightly in the matter, run after his hat with the manliest ardour and the most sacred joy. He might regard himself as a jolly huntsman pursuing a wild animal, for certainly no animal could be wilder. In fact, I am inclined to believe that hat-hunting on windy days will be the sport of the upper classes in the future. There will be a meet of ladies and gentlemen on some high ground on a

gusty morning. They will be told that the professional attendants have started a hat in such and such a thicket, or whatever be the technical term. Notice that this employment will in the fullest degree combine sport with humanitarianism. The hunters would feel that they were not inflicting pain. Nay, they would feel that they were inflicting pleasure, rich, almost riotous pleasure, upon the people who were looking on. When last I saw an old gentleman running after his hat in Hyde Park, I told him that a heart so benevolent as his ought to be filled with peace and thanks at the thought of how much unaffected pleasure his every gesture and bodily attitude were at that moment giving to the crowd.

The same principle can be applied to every other typical domestic worry. A gentleman trying to get a fly out of the milk or a piece of cork out of his glass of wine often imagines himself to be irritated. Let him think for a moment of the patience of anglers sitting by dark pools, and let his soul be immediately irradiated with gratification and repose. Again, I have known some people of very modern views driven by their distress to the use of theological terms to which they attached no doctrinal significance merely because a drawer was jammed tight and they could not pull it out. A friend of mine was particularly afflicted in this way. Every day his drawer was jammed, and every day in consequence it was something else that rhymes to it. But I pointed out to him that this sense of wrong was really subjective and relative; it rested entirely upon the assumption that the drawer could, should, and would come out easily. "But if," I said, "you picture to yourself that you are pulling against some powerful and oppressive enemy, the struggle will become merely exciting and not exasperating. Imagine that you are tugging up a lifeboat out of the sea. Imagine that you are roping up a fellow-creature out of an Alpine crevassé. Imagine even that you are a boy again and engaged in a tug-of-war between French and English." Shortly after saying this I left him; but I have no doubt at all that my words bore the best possible fruit. I have no doubt that

every day of his life he hangs on to the handle of that drawer with a flushed face and eyes bright with battle, uttering encouraging shouts to himself, and seeming to hear all round him the roar of an applauding ring.

So I do not think that it is altogether fanciful or incredible to suppose that even the floods in London may be accepted and enjoyed poetically. Nothing beyond inconvenience seems really to have been caused by them; and inconvenience, as I have said, is only one aspect, and that the most unimaginative and accidental aspect of a really romantic situation. An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered. An inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly considered. The water that girdled the houses and shops of London must, if anything, have only increased their previous witchery and wonder. For as the Roman Catholic priest in the story said: "Wine is good with everything except water," and on a similar principle, water is good with everything except wine.

4. THE APPETITE OF EARTH

I was walking the other day in a kitchen garden, which I find has somehow got attached to my premises, and I was wondering why I liked it. After a prolonged spiritual self-analysis I came to the conclusion that I like a kitchen garden because it contains things to eat. I do not mean that a kitchen garden is ugly; a kitchen garden is often very beautiful. The mixture of green and purple on some monstrous cabbage is much subtler and grander than the mere freakish and theatrical splashing of yellow and violet on a pansy. Few of the flowers merely meant for ornament are so ethereal as a potato. A kitchen garden is as beautiful as an orchard; but why is it that the word "orchard" sounds as beautiful as the word "flower-garden," and yet also sounds more satisfactory? I suggest again my extraordinarily dark and delicate discovery: that it contains things to eat.

The cabbage is a solid; it can be approached from all sides at once; it can be realised by all senses at once. Compared with that the sunflower, which can only be seen, is a mere pattern, a thing painted on a flat wall. Now, it is this sense of the solidity of things that can only be uttered by the metaphor of eating. To express the cubic content of a turnip, you must be all round it at once. The only way to get all round a turnip at once is to eat the turnip. I think any poetic mind that has loved solidity, the thickness of trees, the squareness of stones, the firmness of clay, must have sometimes wished that they were things to eat. If only brown peat tasted as good as it looks, if only white fir-wood were digestible! We talk rightly of giving stones for bread: but there are in the Geological Museum certain bright crimson marbles, certain split stones of blue and green, that make me wish my teeth were stronger.

Somebody staring into the sky with the same ethereal appetite declared that the moon was made of green cheese. I never could conscientiously accept the full doctrine. I am Modernist in this matter. That the moon is made of cheese I have believed from childhood; and in the course of every

month a giant (of my acquaintance) bites a big round piece out of it. This seems to me a doctrine that is above reason, but not contrary to it. But that the cheese is green seems to be in some degree actually contradicted by the senses and the reason; first because if the moon were made of green cheese it would be inhabited; and second because if it were made of green cheese it would be green. A blue moon is said to be an unusual sight; but I cannot think that a green one is much more common. In fact, I think I have seen the moon looking like every other sort of cheese except a green cheese. I have seen it look exactly like a cream cheese: a circle of warm white upon a warm faint violet sky above a cornfield in Kent. I have seen it look very like a Dutch cheese, rising a dull red copper disk amid masts and dark waters at Honfleur. I have seen it look like an ordinary sensible Cheddar cheese in an ordinary sensible Prussian blue sky; and I have once seen it so naked and ruinous-looking, so strangely lit up, that it looked like a Gruyère cheese, that awful volcanic cheese that has horrible holes in it, as if it had come in boiling unnatural milk from mysterious and unearthly cattle. But I have never yet seen the lunar cheese green; and I incline to the opinion that the moon is not old enough. The moon, like everything else, will ripen by the end of the world; and in the last days we shall see it taking on those volcanic sunset colours, and leaping with that enormous and fantastic life.

But this is a parenthesis; and one perhaps slightly lacking in prosaic actuality. Whatever may be the value of the above speculations, the phrase about the moon and green cheese remains a good example of this imagery of eating and drinking on a large scale. The same huge fancy is in the phrase "if all the trees were bread and cheese" which I have cited elsewhere in this connection; and in that noble nightmare of a Scandinavian legend, in which Thor drinks the deep sea nearly dry out of a horn. In an essay like the present (first intended as a paper to be read before the Royal Society) one cannot be too exact; and I will concede that my theory

of the gradual virescence of our satellite is to be regarded rather as an alternative theory than as a law finally demonstrated and universally accepted by the scientific world. It is a hypothesis that holds the field, as the scientists say of a theory when there is no evidence for it so far.

But the reader need be under no apprehension that I have suddenly gone mad, and shall start biting large pieces out of the trunks of trees; or seriously altering (by large semi-circular mouthfuls) the exquisite outline of the mountains. This feeling for expressing a fresh solidity by the image of eating is really a very old one. So far from being a paradox of perversity, it is one of the oldest commonplaces of religion. If any one wandering about wants to have a good trick or test for separating the wrong idealism from the right, I will give him one on the spot. It is a mark of false religion that it is always trying to express concrete facts as abstract; it calls sex affinity; it calls wine alcohol; it calls brute starvation the economic problem. The test of true religion is that its energy drives exactly the other way; it is always trying to make men feel truths as facts; always trying to make abstract things as plain and solid as concrete things; always trying to make men, not merely admit the truth, but see, smell, handle, hear, and devour the truth. All great spiritual scriptures are full of the invitation not to test, but to taste; not to examine, but to eat. Their phrases are full of living water and heavenly bread, mysterious manna and dreadful wine. Worldliness, and the polite society of the world, has despised this instinct of eating; but religion has never despised it. When we look at a firm, fat, white cliff of chalk at Dover, I do not suggest that we should desire to eat it; that would be highly abnormal. But I really mean that we should think it good to eat; good for some one else to eat. For, indeed, some one else is eating it; the grass that grows upon its top is devouring it silently, but, doubtless with an uproarious appetite.

5. CHEESE

My forthcoming work in five volumes, "The Neglect of Cheese in European Literature," is a work of such unprecedented and laborious detail that it is doubtful if I shall live to finish it. Some overflowings from such a fountain of information may therefore be permitted to sprinkle these pages. I cannot yet wholly explain the neglect to which I refer. Poets have been mysteriously silent on the subject of cheese. Virgil, if I remember right, refers to it several times, but with too much Roman restraint. He does not let himself go on cheese. The only other poet I can think of just now who seems to have had some sensibility on the point was the nameless author of the nursery rhyme which says: "If all the trees were bread and cheese"—which is, indeed, a rich and gigantic vision of the higher gluttony. If all the trees were bread and cheese there would be considerable deforestation in any part of England where I was living. Wild and wide woodlands would reel and fade before me as rapidly as they ran after Orpheus. Except Virgil and this anonymous rhymers, I can recall no verse about cheese. Yet it has every quality which we require in exalted poetry. It is a short, strong word; it rhymes to "breeze" and "seas" (an essential point); that it is emphatic in sound is admitted even by the civilisation of the modern cities. For their citizens, with no apparent intention except emphasis, will often say, "Cheese it!" or even "Quite the cheese." The substance itself is imaginative. It is ancient—sometimes in the individual case, always in the type and custom. It is simple, being directly derived from milk, which is one of the ancestral drinks, not lightly to be corrupted with soda-water. You know, I hope (though I myself have only just thought of it), that the four rivers of Eden were milk, water, wine, and ale. Aerated waters only appeared after the Fall.

But cheese has another quality, which is also the very soul of song. Once in endeavouring to lecture in several places at once, I made an eccentric journey across England, a journey

of so irregular and even illogical shape that it necessitated my having lunch on four successive days in four roadside inns in four different counties. In each inn they had nothing but bread and cheese; nor can I imagine why a man should want more than bread and cheese, if he can get enough of it. In each inn the cheese was good; and in each inn it was different. There was a noble Wensleydale cheese in Yorkshire, a Cheshire cheese in Cheshire, and so on. Now, it is just here that true poetic civilization differs from that paltry and mechanical civilisation which holds us all in bondage. Bad customs are universal and rigid, like modern militarism. Good customs are universal and varied, like native chivalry and self-defence. Both the good and bad civilisation cover us as with a canopy, and protect us from all that is outside. But a good civilisation spreads over us freely like a tree, varying and yielding because it is alive. A bad civilisation stands up and sticks out above us like an umbrella—artificial, mathematical in shape; not merely universal, but uniform. So it is with the contrast between the substances that vary and the substances that are the same wherever they penetrate. By a wise doom of heaven men were commanded to eat cheese, but not the same cheese. Being really universal it varies from valley to valley. But if, let us say, we compare cheese with soap (that vastly inferior substance), we shall see that soap tends more and more to be merely Smith's Soap or Brown's Soap, sent automatically all over the world. If the Red Indians have soap it is Smith's Soap. If the Grand Lama has soap it is Brown's Soap. There is nothing subtly and strangely Buddhist, nothing tenderly Tibetan, about his soap. I fancy the Grand Lama does not eat cheese (he is not worthy), but if he does it is probably a local cheese, having some real relation to his life and outlook. Safety matches, tinned foods, patent medicines are sent all over the world; but they are not produced all over the world. Therefore there is in them a mere dead identity, never that soft play of slight variation which exists in things produced everywhere out of

the soil, in the milk of the kine, or the fruits of the orchard. You can get a whisky and soda at every outpost of the Empire: that is why so many Empire-builders go mad. But you are not tasting or touching any environment, as in the cider of Devonshire or the grapes of the Rhine. You are not approaching Nature in one of her myriad tints of mood, as in the holy act of eating cheese.

When I had done my pilgrimage in the four wayside public-houses I reached one of the great northern cities, and there I proceeded, with great rapidity and complete inconsistency, to a large and elaborate restaurant, where I knew I could get many other things besides bread and cheese. I could get that also, however; or at least I expected to get it; but I was sharply reminded that I had entered Babylon, and left England behind. The waiter brought me cheese, indeed, but cheese cut up into contemptibly small pieces; and it is the awful fact that, instead of Christian bread, he brought me biscuits. Biscuits—to one who had eaten the cheese of four great countrysides! Biscuits—to one who had proved anew for himself the sanctity of the ancient wedding between cheese and bread! I addressed the waiter in warm and moving terms. I asked him who he was that he should put asunder those whom Humanity had joined. I asked him if he did not feel, as an artist, that a solid but yielding substance like cheese went naturally with a solid, yielding substance like bread; to eat it off biscuits is like eating it off slates. I asked him if, when he said his prayers, he was so supercilious as to pray for his daily biscuits. He gave me generally to understand that he was only obeying a custom of Modern Society. I have therefore resolved to raise my voice, not against the waiter, but against Modern Society, for this huge and unparalleled modern wrong.

E. V. LUCAS

I. THE OTHER DOCTORS

Too many years ago, when I had serious thoughts of becoming a doctor, I considered also the claims of the veterinary surgeon, and found myself with strong leanings that way; but in the end the pen turned out to be stronger than the knife. But, although I observe with composure the black-coated doctor on his rounds, there is something really attractive to me in the freer-and-easier life of the veterinary surgeon and his associations with dumb creatures. They, at any rate, when they are ill, are ill. They at any rate, do not waste his time. And if bills are mislaid, it is not they that mislay them.

Where the veterinary surgeon stands in the hierarchy of healing, I cannot say; but I know that if I heard a Harley Street consultant speak belittlingly of a 'horse-doctor' I should have something to remark. But I am sure he would not. All the same, I cannot forget the story of Madame Meissonier, wife of the French artist, sending for her medical attendant to come instantly (it may even have been in the middle of the night) to minister to her pet cat. The doctor came, prescribed, and left; but when, some time later, he was asked for his account, he replied that he was rendering none but would be glad if M. Meissonier would repaint his garden gate.

To give up one's life to treating sick animals, and particularly to be willing to cope with an angry cat, is really a fine action. The fact that I myself meditated doing so means nothing, because I abandoned the idea. But these practitioners all over the country are doing it, and I honour them. And what is wrong with a 'horse-doctor', a 'dog-leech'? They are essential, and can be heroes. I have known in my time several veterinary surgeons, all of them hale and hearty, if a trifle brusque and without an inferiority

complex; and none of them was so hale and hearty and so brusque and so proud of himself as the one who, after mending the broken leg of a thoroughbred which had been given up by its owner, had just witnessed the point-to-point race where it had come in first. That was a triumph, if you like. Menders of men can also be cock-a-hoop after a cure that looks miraculous; but there was no mistaken diagnosis about this particular steed. I know that his leg was broken, because I used to see him slung up.

Although, a correspondent remarks, the term veterinary surgeon is comparatively new, there were shoemiths, or farriers, practically as long as there were horses, and it is only one step from shoeing a horse to healing it. Many English names such as Ferrier, Farrier, Farrar, Farrer, probably derive from the smithy.

There is no doubt in my mind that the veterinary surgeon has been unfairly treated by novelists. We meet medical men by the thousand, but I cannot recall a single veterinary surgeon outside the pages of Anstey's *Lyre and Lancet* and of the Two Ladies who wrote the *Irish R.M.* stories. And yet their lives are full of incident and they are men of unusual sagacity. Anybody, it may safely be stated, who can minister to the needs of a suffering four-footed creature, has peculiar qualities. Courage he certainly must have, for, whereas most of us are scared, or at any rate disconcerted, in the presence of an angry dog, he must handle it. Sympathy he must also have, or the dog, a very astute judge, would repulse or even rend him. And he must be, even more than a doctor, superior to bad weather; while it is very unlikely that he can ever cuddle into the corner of a chauffeur-driven car. Veterinary surgeons drive themselves. And they are intrepid motorists too. I met one the other day who, in his car, had just crossed a ploughed field to see a sick cow. No one else that I know would set his tyres at such a surface.

Dogs, however, are commonplace patients, such as we all except perhaps postmen, have occasionally to dose; but where are we when fowls refuse food and canaries droop and

parrots lie on their backs? 'Send for the vet' is at once the cry. And he comes. If there is any kind of case that he would refuse, I should like to know what his limit is. Parrots, of course, are frequently treated, and not too easily either. A parrot that I know, which recently contracted gastritis, recovered only after absorbing glycerine and brandy, ministered by the veterinary surgeon, and then enjoying a prolonged state of coma on the sanded floor. In due course it arose, blinked, waddled, said 'Cheerio' and was well. On the other hand, I know of a veterinary surgeon who had to admit his utter defeat as he fled round the surgery pursued by a macaw. To give a drench to a cow was nothing to him: but for a vengeful macaw he had no technique. Nor (since we are referring to this type of medical men's infrequent failures) could one of his forerunners find anything to say when, after telling Byron, the playwright, that he should give his horse a ball, Byron replied, 'But whom shall I invite?'

2. MY MURDER STORY

Every one who employs the pen must now and then have wished to share the spoils of the writers of detective stories. Whatever his ordinary task, whether novelist of normal life, philosopher (look at Father Brown), biographer, historian, sociologist (consider those Coles), poet, essayist—before him is always the fascination of inventing a chain of circumstances in which, at the beginning, a living fellow-creature is by some lethal process converted into a body, and not until the end is the perpetrator of the crime discovered. That is what the public want to read about, and that therefore is what we want to write about.

Sometimes the body remains where it fell, mutely refusing to divulge the identity of the murderer; sometimes there is a problem as to the cause of death; and sometimes there is a complete disappearance, which in time prompts those suspicions of foul play that lead to inquiries, to detection and to the gallows or the chair. But always there must be an outraged public, and swift investigations either by the officer within the Force, such as Inspector French, or without it but working with it, such as Colonel Gore. Always with tobacco and often with intuitive wives.

No matter what the preliminaries, murder must be committed and when the time is ripe and the secret is revealed, justice must be done, and the finished book will be returned to the library and exchanged for a new one almost exactly like the last. But different enough. Instead of being called, say, *The Murder at the Sixth Tee*, it will be called *The Murder at the Seventh Tee*.

Anyway, that is the kind of book which authors all want to write, for whereas what we normally produce may sell eight hundred copies, crime stories sell eight thousand.

If I have caused you to suppose that because the titles of this kind of work can be not too dissimilar, their plots are alike, I have misled you. There is, among detective novelists, a constant expenditure of grey matter in the attempt at originality, so that one continually marvels at the many ways

in which living human beings can become bodies. One of the best is for the victim to be pushed into a kiln of quick-lime; and indeed it would be perfect but for the circumstance that some one always sees it, and, very likely, thinking it rather odd, looks at his watch. But what I mean to say is, that new forms of murder are constantly being devised by the blameless men and women who flood the market with these books, the ranks of whom all authors, and I among them, are so eager to augment.

It was in the course of considering the question for myself and compiling a mystery which should run to the necessary three hundred-and-fifty pages and make some real money, that I have hit on a plot which I am certain is not hackneyed and which I am going to work out with the closest care. It will include, of course a man who must be got out of the way. I cannot say yet why I dislike him so much, or why he impedes me so much, but he must be got out of the way. Choosing, therefore, my time—on the eve of his departure for Peru, say, on a botanical mission to be carried out alone—I contrive to kill him. How I do this does not at the moment matter, but of course, against fingerprints, I first put on my gloves. At some place where there is no one to see and look at his watch, I kill him, and, having dug the right kind of hole, bury him and his luggage in it.

So much for the first part. I then, having often recapitulated the sequence of events and found no incriminating flaws, await the time when the disappearance will begin to be noted. At first, of course, as he is on his way to Peru, he will not be missed. Then, arriving there, as he is on his botanical expedition in the darker parts of the Peru hinterland, he will not be missed. But later will come the time when he should again be among us, and when, in the usual way, his non-arrival should cause suspicions to be aroused, rumours to be rife and fingers to be pointed.

It is then that I ought to play my cards with the utmost circumspection and be always on guard; it is then that inevitably the little over-looked piece of evidence would, in real life and in the books, crop up and give me away.

This is what would happen in the books. But the difference between my story and all the others—my own startling novelty—is that my victim is never missed. The fact that he does not write, that he is not encountered by anyone in Peru, and that he never returns, excites no comment whatever. He is, in short, never missed; and if a body is not missed, where are you? Murder is in vain. I even walk over the spot where he and his clothes and his luggage are decomposing. I hold picnic-parties there. Laughingly I refer to his mysterious absence; but no one minds. It is, you see, not even the unravelled mystery, it is no mystery at all. Could anything be more original?

That is the new kind of murder story. I thought it out purely as a literary exercise, but I now wonder if the case is unique.

3. THE TOWN WEEK

It is odd that 'Mondayish' is the only word which the days of the week have given us; since Monday is not alone in possessing a positive and peculiar character. Why not 'Tuesdayish' or 'Wednesdayish'? Each word would convey as much meaning to me, 'Tuesdayish' in particular, for Monday's cardinal and reprehensible error of beginning the business week seems to me almost a virtue compared with Tuesday's utter flatness. To begin a new week is no fault at all, though tradition has branded it as one. To begin is a noble accomplishment; but to continue dully, to be the tame follower of a courageous beginner, to be the second day in a week of action, as in Tuesday's case—that is deplorable, if you like.

Monday can be flat enough, but in a different way from Tuesday. Monday is flat because one has been idling, perhaps, unconsciously absorbing notions of living like the lilies; because so many days must pass before the week ends; because yesterday is no more. But Tuesday has the sheer essential flatness of nonentity; Tuesday is nothing. If you would know how absolutely nothing it is, go to a week-end hotel at, say Brighton, and stay on after the Saturday-to-Monday population has flitted. On Tuesday you touch the depths. So does the menu—no chef ever exerted himself for a Tuesday guest. Tuesday is also very difficult to spell, many otherwise cultured ladies putting the *e* before *u*; and why not? What right has Tuesday to any preference?

With all its faults, Monday has a positive character. Monday brings a feeling of revolt; Tuesday, the base craven, reconciles us to the machine. I am not surprised that the recent American revivalists held no meetings on Mondays. It was a mark of their astuteness; they knew that the wear and tear of overcoming the Monday feeling of the greater part of their audience would exhaust them before their magnetism began to have play; while a similarly stubborn difficulty would confront them in the remaining portion sunk

in apathy by the thought that tomorrow would be Tuesday. It is this presage of certain tedium which has robbed Monday evening of its "glittering star." Yet since nothing so becomes a flat day as the death of it, Tuesday evening's glittering star (it is Wordsworth's phrase) is of the brightest—for is not the dreary day nearly done, and is not to-morrow Wednesday the bland?

With Wednesday, the week stirs itself, turns over, begins to wake. There are matinees on Wednesday; on Wednesdays some of the more genial weekly papers come out. The very word has a good honest round air—Wednesday. Things, adventures, might happen very naturally on Wednesday; but that nothing ever happened on a Tuesday I am convinced. In summer Wednesday has often close finishes at Lord's, and it is a day on which one's friends are pretty sure to be accessible. On Monday they may not have returned from the country; on Friday they have begun to go out of town again; but on Wednesday they are here, at home—are solid. I am sure it is my favourite day.

Even politicians, so slow as a rule to recognize the kindlier, more generous, side of life, realized for many years that Wednesday was a day on which they had no right to conduct their acrimonious business for more than an hour or so. Much of the failure of the last Government may be traced to their atheistical decision no longer to remember Wednesday to keep it holy.

On Thursday the week falls back a little; the stirring of Wednesday is forgotten; there is a return to the folding of the hands. I am not sure that Thursday has not become the real day of rest. That it is a good honest day is the most that can be said for it. It is certainly not Thor's day any longer—if my reading of the character of the blacksmith-god is true. There is nothing strong and downright and fine about it. Compared with Tuesday's small beer, Thursday is almost champagne; but none the less they are related. One can group them together. If I were a business man, I should, I am certain, sell my shares at a loss on Monday and at a

profit on Wednesday and Friday, but on Tuesday and Thursday I should get for them exactly what I gave.

I group Friday with Wednesday as a day that can be friendly to me, but it has not Wednesday's quality. Wednesday is calm, assured, urbane; Friday allows itself to be a little flurried and excited. Wednesday stands alone; Friday to some extent throws in its lot with Saturday. Friday is too busy. Too many papers come out, too many bags are packed, on Friday. But herein, of course, is some of its virtue; it is the beginning of the end, the forerunner of Saturday and Sunday. If anticipation, as the moralists say, is better than the realization, Friday is perhaps the best day of the week, for one spends much of it in thinking of the morrow and what of good it should bring forth. Friday's greatest merit is perhaps that it paves the way to Saturday and the cessation of work. That it ever was really unlucky I greatly doubt.

And so we come to Saturday and Sunday. But here the analyst falters, for Saturday and Sunday pass from the region of definable days. Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and Friday, these are days with a character fixed more or less for all. But Saturday and Sunday are what we individually make of them. In one family they are friends, associates; in another as ill-assorted as Socrates and Xantippe. For most of us Saturday is not exactly a day at all, it is a collection of hours, part work, part pleasure, and all restlessness. It is a day that we plan for, and therefore it is often a failure. I have no distinct and unvarying impression of Saturday, except that trains are full and late and shops shut too early.

Sunday even more than Saturday is different as people are different. To the godly it is a day of low tones, its minutes go by muffled; to the children of the godly it is eternity. To the ungodly it is a day jeopardized by an interest in barometers that is almost too poignant. To one man it is an interruption of the week; to another it is the week itself, and all the rest of the days are but preparations for it. One cannot analyze Saturday and Sunday.

But Monday? There we are on solid ground again. Monday—but I have discussed Monday already: that is one of its principal characteristics, that it is always coming round again, pretending to be new. It is always the same in reality.

4. A MOTHER'S COUNSEL

This is the story of a good mother:

Once upon a time there was a black cocker spaniel mother. She had been a mother before and would probably be one again. In fact, it was her business to produce at regular intervals puppies which her owner might turn into money; and she performed her task punctually and with satisfaction.

As the day drew near for each new litter to break up and depart to their various homes, it was her habit to tell them something about the great world that was awaiting them.

On the occasion which I have in mind there were four puppies in all, and only the most highly trained eye could tell them apart. Four London smuts settling on a new chamois-leather glove are not more alike; but of course no cocker pup would do anything so dull as to settle, especially when just on the point of entering adventurous life.

"There are," the mother began, "many different kinds of people to whom you may go; but my wish for all of you is that real sportsmen may want you. All dogs should work, and a cocker in particular."

"What is a cocker's work?" asked No. 1. They had no names as yet. Names would come later, and they often wondered what kind of names they would get.

"It's one of the disappointing things about human beings," the mother had told them, "the names they give dogs. Of course we cockers are luckier than some of the others, because we're serious. But there's a dreadful monotony about even our names. It's our colour—they never can forget we're black. 'Nigger' and 'Topsy' and 'Sambo'—you'll meet them everywhere, and perhaps be called those names yourselves. You might all be 'Nigger' if you go to different homes. But at any rate that's better than the toy dogs—the Poms and the Pekes—they're called 'Fifi' and 'Tou-Tou' and horrible things like that. . . ."

"Nothing would induce me to be called anything so idiotic," said No. 1, who was of an independent turn. "Never," he added, "Never," sinking his teeth well into No. 3's right ear by way of emphasis.

"What is a cocker's work?" he asked.

"A cocker's proud duty," said the mother, "is to follow the gun, obey his master, and never be more than commonly civil with strangers or visitors, not even if they feed him. In fact, however hungry or greedy you feel, I want you, if possible, to refuse any food that visitors at the house offer you. Will you try?"

"We'll try" said the puppies, but there was no ring of confidence in their tones.

"And," the mother continued, "you must never fail to put your master first—always put your master first. You will be devoted to your mistress, of course, but you must always put your master first—especially you girls."

"Yes, mother," said the girls. Two of the puppies were girls.

"If you go to an honest shooting man," the mother resumed, "as I pray and hope you will, you will be more likely to get good names, and be properly looked after. You will live hard. But if you go just to be a companion there will be temptations to live soft, and I want you to fight against these. It is the cockers' tragedy that they get too fat. All do. I am too fat myself."

"Oh no, darling," said the puppies.

"Yes, I am, I am already rather fat, and soon I shall be very fat. But one can postpone this calamity by eating little and taking plenty of exercise and not sleeping too much—although sleeping is very sweet, especially where they keep good fires and soft hearthrugs. For this reason I hope you may go to a district where there are plenty of hares.

"You are not likely to overtake one, but pursuing them will help you to keep your figure.

"What I most hope that any of you may not do," the mother continued, "is to live in London. It is dreadful for a cocker to have to live in London. You'll be led about on a string, which is humiliating and against nature."

"What is London?" asked No. 1.

"London is a great city, made of stone and asphalt, where

there are no rabbits and no partridges, except dead in shops. It is full of hurrying people on the pavements, and cruel rushing wheels in the road. It is no place for a dog."

"I'll never go there," said No. 1 firmly.

"If, however, any of you are fated to become Londoners," the mother went on, "I most earnestly hope that you won't be sold to an actress."

"What is an actress?" asked No. 2.

"An actress is a beautiful lady connected with the stage who doesn't know how to dress in the daytime and who, if she had a dog, likes to carry it . . ."

"No one shall ever carry me," cried No. 1.

". . . and when she is photographed for the papers," the mother continued, "as she is every day, is careful that her darling little doggie is photographed too. So you see why I don't want any of you to belong to an actress; you would always be under her arm and always facing the camera. You would also be called a 'doggie.' I don't mind you being famous characters, but if you must be photographed I would rather you were at the heels of a real master, with a gun. Wouldn't you?"

"Oh yes, mother," they said, while No. 1 went on to affirm that nothing would ever induce him to become an actress's property.

At this moment the dog-breeder appeared at the kennel door with a beautiful lady who filled the air with strange perfumes. It was an actress bent on buying the tweetest and darlinest little black doggie for her very own, no matter what it cost! After a long period of mind-changing and ecstatic doubt, she made her selection. Need I say that she chose No. 1 and that No. 1 was borne away under her arm?

The last thing that the others heard was the actress's voice of silver saying, "The pet! I shall call him Tou-Tou!"

5. ON FINDING THINGS

After the passage of several years since I had picked up anything, last week I found successively a carriage key (in Royal Hospital Road), a brooch (in Church Street, Kensington), and six pence in a third-class compartment. It was as I stooped to pick up the sixpence, which had suddenly gleamed at me under the seat of the now empty carriage, that I said to myself that finding things is one of the purest of earthly joys.

And how rare!

I have, in a lifetime that now and then appals me by its length, found almost nothing. These three things last week; a brown-paper packet when I was about seven containing eight pennies and one halfpenny; on the grass in the New Forest, when I was about twenty, a half-dollar piece; and in Brighton, not long after, a gold brooch of just sufficient value to make it decent to take it to the police station, from which, a year later, no one having claimed it, it was returned to me: these constitute nearly half a century's haul. I might add—now and then perhaps, a safety-pin, pencil, some other trifle, which, no matter how well supplied with such articles one may be, cannot be acquired from nothing without a thrill. Blue-sky dividends, shall we call them? Even Mr. Rockefeller, I take it, would not have been unmoved had he, instead of myself, stumbled on that treasure between Stony Cross and Boldrewood.

To be given such things is not comparable. With a gift—intention, consciousness, preparation, come in; to say nothing of obligation later. The event is also complicated (and therefore shorn of its glory) by the second person, since the gift must be given. But, suddenly dropping one's eyes, to be aware of a coin—that is sheer rapture. Other things can be exciting too, but a coin is best, because a coin is rarely identifiable by the loser. Moreover, I am naturally confining myself to those things the ownership of which could not possibly be traced. To find things which have to be surrendered is as impure a joy as the world contains, and no theme for this pen.

The special quality of the act of finding something, with its consequent exhilaration, is half unexpectedness and half separateness. There being no warning, and the article coming to you by chance, no one is to be thanked, no one to be owed anything. In short, you have achieved the greatest human triumph—you have got “something for nothing.” That is the true idea: the “nothing” must be absolute; one must never have looked, never have had any finding intention, or even hope. To look for things is to change the whole theory—to rob it of its divine suddenness; to become anxious, even avaricious; to partake of the nature of the rag-picker, the chiffonier, or those strange men that one notices walking, with bent heads, along the shore after a storm. (None the less that was a great moment, once, in the island of Coll, when after two hours systematic searching I found the plover’s nest.)

Finding things is at once so rare and pure a joy that to trifle with it is peculiarly heartless. Yet are there people so wantonly in need of sport as to do so. Every one knows of the purse laid on the path or pavement beside a fence, which, as the excited passer-by stoops to pick it up, is twitched through the palings by its adherent string. There is also the shilling attached to a string which can be dropped in the street and instantly pulled up again, setting every eye at a pavement scrutiny. Could there be lower tricks? I fear so, because some years ago, in the great days of the rendezvous of Bohemians in the Strand known as the Marble Halls, a wicked wag (I have been told) once nailed a bad but plausible sovereign to the floor and waited events. In the case of the purse and string the butts are few and far between and there is usually only a small audience to rejoice in their discomfiture, but the denouement of the cruel comedy at the Marble Halls, of which acquisitiveness and cunning were the warp and woof was only too bitterly public. I am told, such is human resourcefulness in guile, that very few of those who saw the coin and marked it down as their own went for it right away, because had they done so the action might

have been noticed and the booty claimed. Instead, the discoverer would look swiftly and stealthily round and then gradually and with every affectation of nonchalance (which to those in the secret, watching from the corners of their wicked eyes, was so funny as to be an agony) he would get nearer and nearer until he was able at last to place one foot on it.

This accomplished, he would relax into something like real naturalness, and, practically certain of his prey, take things easily for a moment or so. Often, I am told, the poor dupe would, at this point, whistle the latest tune. Even now, however, he dared not abandon subterfuge, or his prize, were he seen to pick it up, might have to be surrendered or shared; so the next move was to drop his handkerchief, the idea being to pick up both it and the sovereign together. Such explosions of laughter as followed upon his failure to do so can (I am informed) rarely have been heard.

Such was the conspiracy of the nailed sovereign, which now and then, the victim, shaking the chagrin from him, would without shame himself join, and become a delighted spectator of his successor's humiliation.

Can you conceive of a more impish hoax? But I should like to see it.

HILAIRE BELLOC

I. THE ONION-EATER

There is a hill not far from my home whence it is possible to see northward and southward such a stretch of land as is not to be seen from any eminence among those I know in Western Europe. Southward the sea-plain and the sea standing up in a belt of light against the sky, and northward all the weald.

From this summit the eye is disturbed by no great cities of the modern sort, but a dozen at least of those small market towns which are the delight of South England hold the view from point to point, from the pale blue downs of the island over, eastward, to the Kentish hills.

A very long way off, and near the sea-line, the high faint spire of that cathedral which was once the mother of all my county goes up without weight into the air and gathers round it the delicate and distant outlines of the landscape—as, indeed, its builders meant that it should do. In such a spot, on such a high watch-tower of England, I met, three days ago, a man.

I had been riding my kind and honourable horse for two hours, broken, indeed, by a long rest in a deserted barn.

I had been his companion, I say, for two hours, and had told him a hundred interesting things—to which he had answered nothing at all—when I took him along a path that neither of us yet had trod. I had not, I know; he had not (I think), for he went snorting and doubtfully. This path broke up from the kennels near Waltham, and made for the High Wood between Gumber and No-Man's-Land. It went over dead leaves and quite lonely to the thick of the forest; there it dies out into a vaguer and a vaguer trail. At last it ceased altogether, and for half an hour or so I pushed carefully, always climbing upwards, through the branches, and picked my way along the bramble-shoots, until

at last I came out upon that open space of which I have spoken, and which I have known since my childhood. As I came out of the wood the south-west wind met me, full of the Atlantic, and it seemed to me to blow from Paradise.

I remembered, as I halted and so gazed north and south to the weald below me, and then again to the sea, the story of that Sultan who publicly proclaimed that he had possessed all power on earth, and had numbered on a tablet with his own hand each of his happy days, and had found them, when he came to die, to be seventeen. I know what that heathen had meant, and I looked into my heart as I remembered the story, but I came back from the examination satisfied, for 'So far,' I said to myself, 'this day is among my number, and the light is falling. I will count it for one.' It was then that I saw before me, going easily and slowly across the downs, the figure of a man.

He was powerful, full of health and easy; his clothes were rags; his face was open and bronzed. I came at once off my horse to speak with him, and holding my horse by the bridle, I led it forward till we met. Then I asked him whither he was going, and whether, as I knew these open hills by heart, I could not help him on his way.

He answered me that he was in no need of help, for he was bound nowhere, but that he had come up off the high road on to the hills in order to get his pleasure and also to see what there was on the other side. He said to me also, with evident enjoyment (and in the accent of a lettered man), 'This is indeed a day to be alive!'

I saw that I had here some chance of an adventure, since it is not every day that one meets upon a lonely down a man of culture, in rags and happy. I therefore took the bridle right off my horse and let him nibble, and I sat down on the bank of the Roman road holding the leather of the bridle in my hand, and wiping the bit with plucked grass. The stranger sat down beside me, and drew from his pocket a piece of bread and a large onion. We then talked of those things which should chiefly occupy mankind: I mean, of

happiness and of the destiny of the soul. Upon these matters I found him to be exact, thoughtful, and just.

First, then, I said to him: 'I also have been full of gladness all this day, and, what is more, as I came up the hill from Waltham I was inspired to verse, and wrote it inside my mind, completing a passage I had been working at for two years, upon joy. But it was easy for me to be happy, since I was on a horse and warm and well fed; yet even for me such days are capricious. I have known but few in my life. They are each of them distinct and clear, so rare are they, and (what is more) so different are they in their very quality from all other days.'

'You are right,' he said, 'in this last phrase of yours. . . . They are indeed quite other from all the common days of our lives. But you were wrong, I think, in saying that your horse and clothes and good feeding and the rest had to do with these curious intervals of content. Wealth makes the run of our days somewhat more easy, poverty makes them more hard—or very hard. But no poverty has ever yet brought of itself despair into the soul—the men who kill themselves are neither rich nor poor. Still less has wealth ever purchased those peculiar hours. I also am filled with their spirit today, and God knows,' said he, cutting his onion in two, so that it gave out a strong savour, 'God knows I can purchase nothing.'

'Then tell me,' I said, 'whence do you believe these moments come? And will you give me half your onion?'

'With pleasure,' he replied, 'for no man can eat a whole onion; and as for that other matter, why, I think the door of heaven is ajar from time to time, and that light shines out upon us for a moment between its opening and closing.' He said this in a merry, sober manner; his black eyes sparkled, and his large beard was blown about a little by the wind. Then he added: 'If a man is a slave to the rich in the great cities (the most miserable of mankind), yet these days come to him. To the vicious wealthy and privileged men, whose faces are stamped hard with degradation, these days come;

they come to you, you say, working (I suppose) in anxiety like most of men. They come to me who neither work nor am anxious so long as South England may freely import onions.'

'I believe you are right,' I said. 'And I especially commend you for eating onions; they contain all health; they induce sleep; they may be called the apples of content, or, again, the companion-fruits of mankind.'

'I have always said,' he answered gravely, 'that when the couple of them left Eden they hid and took away with them an onion. I am moved in my soul to have known a man who reveres and loves them in the due measure, for such men are rare.'

Then he asked, with evident anxiety: 'Is there no inn about here where a man like me will be taken in?'

'Yes,' I told him. 'Down under the Combe at Duncton is a very good inn. Have you money to pay? Will you take some of my money?'

'I will take all you can possibly afford me,' he answered in a cheerful, manly fashion. I counted out my money and found I had on me but 3*s.* 7*d.* 'Here is 3*s.* 7*d.*,' I said.

'Thank you, indeed,' he answered, taking the coins and wrapping them in a little rag (for he had no pockets, but only holes).

'I wish,' I said with regret, 'we might meet and talk more often of many things. So much do we agree, and men like you and me are often lonely.'

He shrugged his shoulders and put his head on one side, quizzing at me with his eyes. Then he shook his head decidedly, and said: 'No, no—it is certain that we shall never meet again.' And thanking me with great fervour, but briefly, he went largely and strongly down the escarpment of the Combe to Duncton and the weald; and I shall never see him again till the Great Day. . . .

2. A CONVERSATION WITH A READER

People whose books sell largely (mine do not, I am sorry to say—but perhaps some day they will) must often have had an experience which only came to me once in my life: that of talking familiarly with a member of the public who was reading one of my immortal works. But I cannot remember any one who has given the world an account of such an experience. I will take the opportunity of doing so here; for it still gives me perpetual pleasure and amusement.

It is now many years ago. I was travelling down from Birmingham to London on the Great Western Railway. I was in a third-class smoking carriage with one other person, whom I took (from his little black bag and his manner) to be a commercial traveller, but he may have been anything else, a publican or the Hangman. He had a good solid face, and rather a fine one, strong hands, and a quiet demeanour. It was in the early autumn and sunny weather—such weather prepared me to be contented with the world and any chance companion. My heart was already high, when it rose dizzily upon my catching the title of the book which my fellow-traveller had in his hand. It was one of my too numerous books of essays.

I thought to myself: 'This is fame; I am getting known. This man is a very good specimen of the average public. I love him; he is reading my book. Doubtless many hundreds up and down the great enchanted island are doing the same, some reading one book, some another. They will read and re-read these books until their covers are worn out, and then they will buy another copy. They will tell their friends. More and more copies will sell. The world has changed its complexion and my sun has risen at last.'

As these pleasing thoughts succeeded each other in my mind the man opposite me put down the volume with a sigh (or, to be more particular, chucked it down on the dirty cushion), looked up to me and said: 'Silly stuff that.'

I said, 'Yes,' and asked him how he came to read it.

He said, 'I dunno,' and looked calmly at nothing for a short space in silence.

Then he added: 'I was just looking over the bookstall and the man recommended it to me. I think he must have taken it up by mistake for another book. Anyhow, it's a shilling wasted' (for in those days the cheap editions were at a shilling).

I asked him who the author was, and he again said dully; 'I dunno.' But he made a languid gesture, picked up the book again, looked at the back, pronounced my name wrongly, and then threw the book down again—and once more sighed.

'Funny thing,' he said, 'this idea of reading when one's travelling; but I have got so that I must read something—only I can't read *that* stuff.'

This time there was a note of bitterness in his complaint. I do not think he would have felt so strongly about it if he had found the poor little volume lying about; it was having spent a shilling on it that rankled.

I said: 'What's it all about?'

'I dunno,' he answered. 'Nothing that I can make out!'

He picked up the book again and looked at the title. 'It doesn't tell you on the outside. What they've printed there is just foolishness. There's no story I can make out. It's all cut up. Might be newspaper articles!'

All these words of his were painful ones. They were indeed newspaper articles which I, poor hack, had strung together, and put between covers for my living.

'Anyhow,' he went on, in the slightly more interested tone of a man who wants to begin a conversation, 'it beats me why people want to publish books like that!'

I said: 'It was probably done for money.' He repeated: 'Seems so; but there can't be much in it.' Then he said: 'Never heard of him before!' and looked out of the window sadly, and added: 'And don't want to hear of him again!'

I asked him who were his favourite authors. He mentioned several, to repeat whose names would, I suppose, be libel; one of them was a poet. It gave me pleasure to think that the man read verse, and I asked him what it was he liked about this poet. He suddenly became enthusiastic.

'It's splendid stuff,' he said; 'good ringing stuff! None of your little England about it!' and he recited the poem called *Has made us what we are*.

'That's the stuff!' he said, and added 'to give 'em.' Then after a pause: 'It stirs the blood.' He was prepared to affirm that there was nothing the matter with old England so long as stuff like that could be written.

Then he started another kind of poem by the same man. This time it was all about a dear little child. It was called *Sambo's Prayer*. When he had finished he sighed. Then he said with a kind of quizzical look, as though examining the depths of his heart: 'I wonder how it comes to 'em? It's genius, I suppose. You and I couldn't do that.' He shook his head: 'No, not for a handful of golden sovereigns we couldn't! It just comes to 'em.'

I asked him if he had ever met the Great Poet, but he said 'Lord, no!' in tones of awe; as though such mighty accidents were not for mortal man.

The train was slowing up for Oxford, and the bagman or evangelist or commission agent, or whatever he was, got up, snapped his bag, and was evidently going to get out, when an Angel put a thought into my mind, and I did my Good Deed for the Day. I said: 'I really don't know whether you will think I am taking a liberty, but may I buy the book off you?' He said that this did not seem to be fair. I said: 'Well, the reason is I shall have nothing to read between this and London, and I am tired of doing geometry in my head.' 'Doing what?' he said. I said: 'Nothing; only reading passes the time, and I should really be glad of any book, even that book.' He rather hesitatingly accepted my offer; for he was an honest man, and he did not like the idea of my being a shilling out on such fearful rubbish. But he took the coin at last and the property changed hands.

3. THE COASTGUARD

I have just set down (and you, I hope, have read—since I wrote it for the strengthening of my fellow-men) an experience of mine with one of the readers of my books: a man in a train who treated what I had written with great contempt.

Now I have to relate a contrary experience. But I will not say that it happened to myself, for if I did that I should mislead. I will only swear to this, that it did happen to a penman of my own sort, that is, to a man who was not a best seller, and who ground out his livelihood in journalism and little known novels, and who loved the sea. So let *Jonah* be his name.

Well, this is what happened to Jonah; and, in reading it, let the great host of writers lift up their hearts and be comforted; it is, for them, a most encouraging story.

The sea that bounds South England has as many moods as any sea in the world, and one of its moods is that of calm vision like St. Monica by the window at prayer.

When the sea of South England is in this mood, it is very hard upon sailing men; especially if they have no horrible motor on board. For in this mood, there is no wind upon the sea; all lies asleep.

The sea was in such a mood two or three years ago, when this writing fellow, Mr. Jonah, sat in his little boat cursing the saintly calm of the great waters. It was hot; it was about five o'clock in the afternoon; and save for the drift of the tide he had not made as many miles since noon as he had passed hours. Now and then a little cat's-paw would just dimple the silky water and then die out again. The big lug-sail which was her only canvas (for such breath as there was came aft, and it was no use setting the jib) hung like despair in the souls of evil men grown old. To the North, in the haze, and fairly close by, was England; that famous island. But in the way of a port or shelter, or place to leave the boat till the next free day (and writers never have much spare time for sailing), there was none for many miles.

He had hoped to get into a river mouth of his acquaintance before evening; that hope he must now abandon. It was necessary for him to return to his disgusting labours with the pen, and he was anxious what he should do. With him was a younger companion; and when it was clear that things were hopeless, when the blazing sun had set in a sea of glass, and the long evening had begun, the unfortunate pedlar of prose and verse and rhetoric and tosh saw that there was nothing for it but to take to the oars. Before doing this he looked along the haze of the land through his binoculars and spotted a Coastguard Station. There he thought he would leave the craft for the night. His boat (it was the second and smaller of his fleet) was not too big to be hauled up above high-water mark, and there seemed no prospect of bad weather.

He could return to push her off again in a few days.

They bent to the oars, and before darkness had quite fallen the keel had gently slid up upon fine sand, and these two men, the nib driver and his younger companion, waded ashore with the warping rope, and on the end of it they bent a little kedge to hold her; for the tide had turned and the flood had begun.

They walked up to the Coastguard's house, and were received with due courtesy but without enthusiasm. The Coastguard undertook, however, to look after the boat for an agreed sum, and the column filler, this fellow Jonah, took a piece of paper to write down with his poor fountain pen his name and address, that he might give it to the Coastguardsman.

Then it was that the moment of miracle came!

The Coastguard bent his eyes upon the paper and was transfigured. His whole being was changed. His soul was illumined. His frame shook. When he spoke it was in a voice that seemed to hesitate in his throat with emotion—utterly different from that businesslike seaman's tone in which he had hitherto accepted payment for service.

'Can it be' (he said) 'that I am addressing the world-

famous Mr. Jonah? Not Mr. Jonah the *writer*?—the *great* writer?’ The phrase hawker was very much astonished by this form of address. He had never tasted fame, and least of all did he expect it from such a source in such a field. He remembered his sixth *Aeneid*: if good fortune is to come, it will come from a source whence one expects it least of all.

‘Not Mr. *Jonah*?’ went on the Coastguard, in trembling tones, and reaching out his hand to steady himself upon the table, ‘The *great* Mr. Jonah? The *writer*? Never did I think that I should live to see this day.’

His eyes filled with tears, his voice trembled, and he was silent. But he gazed upon the eyes and nose of the hack with a wrapt, devout air, as upon the features of a God.

Praise is pleasant enough; at any rate, in its beginnings and before a man has had too much of it (for when he is getting plenty of it he will get plenty of hate as well). Fame is always an admirable thing to possess—though publicity is detestable.

The writer, thus finding (towards the close of a long and ill-spent life) Fame trumpeted to him from the lips of a sailorman, was not displeased. He knew it was his turn to answer and he could think of nothing to say. He murmured the sort of words which he had been taught to murmur to rich women who pretended to have read his books, and who left them lying about uncut on the table when they knew he was to visit their houses. Then a good thought struck him, and he said: ‘Would you like me to send you one of my books? I should think it a great honour.’ This was a lie. He did really want to send the man a book, for he was grateful; but it was not true that he felt it to be a great honour. He would have felt it an honour if he had been dealing with a rich woman, but even then he would have worried about the expense.

For I must here digress to tell the reader, in case the reader is not a writer too (and I sincerely hope that she is not)—I must digress (I say) to tell the reader that literary

men do not, as the cruel world imagines, get their books for nothing. *They have to buy their own books.* It is a very abominable custom, but so it stands.

He hoped, therefore, that the Coastguard would in his answer leave him the choice of the book, or (better still!) would name one of the cheap ones. But what did the Coastguardsman reply? Why, another thing, almost as astonishing as his first speech. He said:

'Oh, sir! I have them all!'

'What!' shouted the inky one. 'All my sixty-nine books!'

'Well, sir, all that have anything to do with the Sea.'

At this the literary gentleman was struck dumb, for he had not found such faith in Israel.

He said: 'May I send you my—,' and here he mentioned a book long dead, damned, and done for, but with plenty of the salt water about it; a book written in a very affected manner, and well deserving oblivion.

The Coastguard could hardly believe his ears.

'Oh, sir,' he said, 'if you will do that it will be the proudest moment of my life! And will you inscribe it for me?'

'I will indeed,' said the writer, courteously. So much flattery had turned him for the time being into a sort of Public Person, and he felt himself adopting the tone called 'What can I do for you?': as though he were a politician or a moneylender's tout. So true is it that well-being degrades the soul. 'I will indeed,' he said. And so he did.

4. TALKING OF POVERTY

I had occasion the other day to give an address to a number of young men upon the matter of Poverty: which address I had intended to call "Poverty: The Attainment of It: the Retention of It when Attained." But I found that no title was required, for Poverty was familiar to them all.

In giving this short address I discovered, as one always does in the course of speaking without notes, all manner of new aspects of the thing.

The simple, straightforward view of poverty we all know: how it is beneficial to the soul, what a training it is, how acceptable to the Higher Powers, and so on. We also know all those men whom we are taught to admire began with poverty, and we all have, I hope, at the back of our minds a conception of poverty as a sort of foundation for virtue and right living.

But these ideas are general and vague. I was led by my discourse to consider the thing in detail, and to think out by reminiscence and reason certain small, solid, particular advantages in poverty, and also a sort of theory of maintenance in poverty: rules for remaining poor.

I thus discovered first of all a definition of poverty, which is this:

"Poverty is that state in which a man is perpetually anxious for the future of himself and his dependents, unable to pursue life upon a standard to which he was brought up, tempted both to subservience and to a sour revolt, and tending inexorably towards despair."

Such was the definition of poverty to which I arrived, and once arrived at, the good effects flowing from such a condition are very plain.

The first great good attendant upon poverty is that it makes men generous. You will notice that while some few of the rich are avaricious or mean, and while all of them have to be, from the very nature of their position, careful, the poor and embarrassed man will easily share whatever little he has. It is true, that this generosity of the poor man flows

from no good motive, but merely from a conviction that, whatever he does, it will be much the same in the end; so that his kindness to his fellows is a mixture of weakness and indifference. Still, it breeds a habit; and that is why men whose whole characters have been formed under this kind of poverty always throw away their money when by any chance they get a lump of it.

Then there is this other good attending poverty, that it cures one of illusions.

The most irritating thing in the company of the rich (and especially of rich women) is the very morass of illusion in which they live. Indeed, it cannot be all illusion, there must be a good deal of conscious falsehood about it. But at any rate it is an abyss of unreality, communion with which at last becomes intolerable. Now the poor man is physically prevented from falling into such vices of the heart and intelligence. He cannot possibly think that the police are heroes, the judges superhuman beings, the motives of men in general other than vile. He can nourish no fantasies upon the kind old family servant or the captain of industry, his supreme intelligence. The poor man is up against it, as the phrase goes. He is up against the bullying and corruption of the police, the inhuman stupidity of the captain of industry, the sly, self-advancement of the lawyer, the abominable hypocrisies of the old family servant. He comes across all these things by contact: by direct personal sensible experience. He can no more think of mankind as a garden than a soldier can think of war as a picture, or a sailor of the sea as a pleasure-place.

We may also thank poverty (those of us who are enjoying her favours) for cutting quite out of our lives certain extraordinary necessities which haunt our richer brethren.

I know a rich man who is under compulsion to change his clothes twice a day, to travel at set periods to set places and to see in rotation each of at least sixty people. He has less freedom than a schoolboy in school, or a corporal in a regiment; indeed, he has no real leisure at all, because so

many things are thus necessary to him. But your poor man cannot even conceive what these necessities may be. If you were to tell him that he had to go and soak himself in the vulgarity of the Riviera for so many weeks, he would not understand the word 'had' at all. He would say that perhaps there were some people who liked that kind of thing, but that anyone should do it without really liking it he could not understand.

And here's another boon granted us only by grinding, anxious, sordid poverty: action.

There is no greater enemy of the Soul than sloth; but in this state of ceaseless dull exasperation like a kind of grumbling toothache, sloth is impossible.

Yet another enemy of the Soul is pride, and even the sour poor man cannot really nourish pride; he may wish to nourish it; he may hope in future to nourish it; but he cannot immediately nourish it.

Or, again, the Soul is hurt by luxury. Now poverty in the long run, forbids or restricts luxury.

I know very well that you will tell me with countless instances how the poor gentlemen of your acquaintance drink cocktails, eat caviare, go to the theatre (and that in the stalls), take taxis, order liqueurs with their coffee and blew cheques. Very true, but if you will narrowly watch the careers of such, you will find that there is a progressive decline of these habits of theirs; the taxis get rarer and rarer after forty-five, caviare dies out, and though liqueur with coffee goes on, the coffee is on that account less frequent. There is a real discipline, incredible as it may seem, imposed upon luxury by poverty. Indeed, I met a man only last April in a town called Lillebonne (where I was examining the effects of Roman remains upon hotel-keeping), and this man told me that before the War he habitually spent his holiday (he was a parson) in Switzerland, but now he could not get beyond Normandy. Whereupon I sketched for him on a piece of paper a scheme showing, with a radius vector (the same graduated, which, indeed was my parson, also)

and drawn to scale, the expenses of a holiday. Therein did I show him how a holiday killing lions in East Africa cost so much, another badgering the French in Morocco so much, another annoying the Spaniards so much: and how the cheapest holiday of all was a holiday on foot in Normandy, which lies but one poor Bradbury from the coasts of these islands. This little diagram he folded and took away—little knowing that a still cheaper holiday could be taken in the Ardennes.

Poverty has a yet nobler effect by its introduction into our lives of irony: and irony I take to be the salt in the feast of intelligence. I have, indeed, known rich men to possess irony, but only by importation, just as a man may possess a picture which he has bought. Poor men possess irony as native to themselves, so that it is like a picture which a man paints for his own pleasure and puts upon his own walls. All the poor of London have irony, and, indeed, poor men all over the world have irony; even poor gentlemen, after the age of fifty, discover veins of irony and are the better for them, as a man is better for salt in his cooking. Remark that irony kills stupid satire, and that to have an agent within one that kills stupid satire is to possess an antiseptic against the suppurative reactions of the soul.

Poverty, again, makes men appreciate reality. You may tell me that this is of no advantage. It is of no direct advantage; but I am sure it is of advantage in the long run. For if you ignore reality you will come sooner or later against it like a ship against a rock in a fog, and you will suffer as the ship will suffer.

If you say to the rich man that some public fellow or other has genius, he may admit it in a lazy but sincere fashion. A poor man knows better; he may admit it with his lips, but he is not so foolish as to accept it in his heart. In the same way a rich man growing old will try to forget Death: but a poor man, especially if he has children, keeps Death steadily before him.

And indeed the very best one can say of poverty is that

it prepared one very carefully for the grave. I heard it said once by a beggar in a passion that the rich took nothing with them down to death. In the literal acceptance of the text he was wrong, for the rich take down with them to death flattery, folly, illusion, pride and a good many other lesser garments which have grown into their skins, and the tearing off of which at the great stripping must hurt a good deal. But I know what this mendicant meant—he meant that they take nothing with them down to the grave in the way of motor-cars, hot water, clean change of clothes and various intolerably boring games. The rich go down to death stripped of external things not grown into their skins; the poor go down to death stripped of everything. Therefore in Charon's boat they get forward, and are first upon the further shore.

And this, I suppose, is some sort of advantage.

5. ON A PIECE OF ROPE

The other day as I was sailing down channel at dawn I contemplated a piece of rope (which was my only companion) and considered how many things attached to it, and of what sort these were.

I considered in the first place (as it has become my unhappy custom to do about most things) how mighty a theme this piece of rope would be for the modern rubbish, for the modern abandonment of common sense. I considered how many thousand people would, in connection with that bit of rope, write that man had developed it through countless ages of upward striving from the first dim savage regions where some half-ape-like creature first twisted grass, to the modern factory of Lord Ropemaker-in-chief, which adorns some Midland Hell to-day. I considered how people made up history of that kind entirely out of their heads and how it sold by the waggon-load. I considered how the other inventions which I had seen arise with my own eyes had always come suddenly, with a burst, unexpectedly, from the oddest quarters. I considered how not even this glaring experience was of the least use in preventing fools from talking folly.

Next I considered, as I watched that bit of rope, the curious historical fact of anonymity. Someone first thought out the bowline knot. Who was it? He never left a record. It seems that he desired to leave none. There would appear to be only two kinds of men who care about leaving a record of themselves: artists and soldiers. Innumerable other creators since the world began are content, it would seem, with creation and despise fame. I have often wondered, for instance, who invented forming fours. I very much doubt his being a soldier. Certainly he was not a poet. If he had been a soldier he would not have let you forget him in a hurry—and as for poets, they are good for nothing and could no more invent a useful thing than fly.

Note you, that forming fours is something which must have been invented at one go. There is no "Development" about it. It is a simple, immediate and revolutionary trick.

It was not—and then it was. Note you also that until the trick of forming fours was discovered, no conversion from line into column was possible, and therefore no quick handling of men. So with knots and so with splicing. There are, indeed, one or two knots that have names of men attached to them. There is Walker's knot, for instance. But Walker (if Walker it was who invented it) made no great effort to perpetuate his fame, and all the common useful knots without which civilization could not go on, and on which the State depends, were modestly given to mankind as a Christian man, now dead, used to give his charity—without advertisement.

And this consideration of knots led me to another, which was of those things which had been done with ropes and which without ropes would never have happened. The sailing of the sea, the execution of countless innocent men, and now and then by accident, of somebody who really deserved death: The tying of bundles, which is the solid foundation of all trade: The lasso for the catching of beasts: The hobbling of horses: The strengthening of man through pulleys: The casting of bridges over chasms: The sending of great messages to beleagured cities: The escapes of kings and heroes. All these would not have been but for ropes.

As I looked at the rope I further considered how strange it was that ropes had never been worshipped. Men have worshipped the wall, and the post, and the sun, and the house. They have worshipped their food and their drink. They have, you may say ceremonially worshipped their clothes; they have worshipped their headgear especially, crowns, mitres, ta-ra-ras; and they have worshipped the music which they have created. But I never heard of anyone worshipping a rope. Nor have I ever heard of a rope being made a symbol. I can recollect but one case in which it appears in a coat-of-arms, and that is, I think, in the case of the County or City of Chester, where, as I seem to remember, the Chester knot is emblazoned. But no one used it that I can remember in the Crusades, when all coats-of-arms

were developing. And this is odd, for they used every other conceivable thing—windmills, spurs, boots, roses, staffs, waves of the sea, the crescent moon, lions and leopards and the elephant, and black men's heads, birds, horses, unicorns, griffons, jolly little dogs, chess boards, eagles—every conceivable thing human or imaginary they pressed into service; but no ropes.

One would have thought that the rope would have been a basis of measurement, but there are only two ways in which it comes in for so obvious a purpose, and one of these is lost. There was the old Norman *hrap*, which was vague enough, and there is the cable, the tenth of a sea mile. But the rope does not come into any other measurement; for you cannot count the knots on a log line as a form of measurement with ropes. The measurement itself is not drawn from the rope but from geographical degrees.

Further, I considered the rope (as it lay there) on its literary side. No one has written verses to ropes. There is one verse about ropes, or mainly about ropes in a chaunty, but I do not think there is any poem dedicated to ropes and dealing mainly with ropes. They are about the only thing upon which verse has not been accumulated—bad verse—for centuries.

Yet the rope has one very important place in literature which is not recognized. It is this: that ropes more than any other subject are, I think, a test of a man's power of exposition in prose. If you can describe clearly without a diagram the proper way of making this or that knot, then you are a master of the English tongue. You are not only a master—you are a sign, a portent, a new discoverer, an exception among your fellow men, a unique fellow. For no one yet in this world surely has attained to lucidity in this most difficult branch of all expression. I find over and over again in the passages of those special books which talk of ropes, such language as—"This is a very useful knot and is made as follows:—a bight is taken in the standing apart and is then run over right handedly, with the sun

or, again, the hands of a watch (only backward), and then under the running part and so through both times and hauled tight by the free end." But if any man should seek to save his life on a dark night in a sudden gust of wind by this description he would fail: he would drown.

Take the simplest of them. Take the Clove Hitch. Write a sentence in English which will explain (without a picture) how to cast a Clove Hitch. I do not think you will succeed.

ROBERT LYND

I. ARGUING

If there is one thing for which I honour the human race more than for another, it is the way in which it goes on arguing. A visitor from another planet, landing on earth, would be amazed at the extent to which controversy flourishes everywhere except in those ultramodern countries in which it is forbidden. He would say to himself: 'Why do these people argue so hotly? Those who argue were not converted to their beliefs by reason, so why should they hope to convert others by arguments that would not have convinced themselves? The human being seems to be a person who jumps mystically to conclusions, yet who never loses hope of being able to reason others into the same conclusions.' The fact that, in spite of the obvious truth of this, men go on arguing, is a proof of the unquenchable optimism of the human race.

Consider for a moment. You who are middle-aged must have taken part in thousands of arguments. You argued in the nursery and you won, though your nurse did not admit it. You argued with uncles and aunts, with great-uncles and great-aunts, and thrashed them all without making the slightest impression on them. You argued triumphantly at school without ever converting a schoolfellow. Later, your college rang with your incontrovertible statements on matters religious, political, literary, and metaphysical; and not a single contemporary of the opposite opinion even knew that you had won. In the wide world you continued to fight for the truth like a skilled fencer—in your and other people's homes, in offices, in restaurants, in the streets, perhaps in public-houses. You have been arguing, say, for forty years, and how many converts you have made? You will be lucky, I think, if you can name three.

I do not mean to make the absurd suggestion that people

never change their opinions. I doubt, however, whether they often change them in consequence of an argument. I myself became a Socialist in my teens, but I was no more reasoned into it than into smoking. The thing simply happened without my knowing how or why it had happened. Yet no sooner was I mystically converted to a belief in Socialism than I began to badger all my friends and acquaintances with arguments that, sound as they were, I should have laughed at a month or two before. In vain did they try not to listen or to turn the subject. To me they were brands to be plucked from the burning by controversy. I plucked my hardest, but how merrily they all continued to burn!

My conversion to Nationalism was more rational, but even so, it was not the result of other people's arguments. I had come to England from the north of Ireland, believing in my simplicity that the English spent their days and nights thinking out plans for the welfare of Ireland—for improving the land system and the education system, and for draining the regions of the Bann and the Barrow. To my surprise, I found that the English were a very practical people who had enough problems of their own to solve without spending sleepless nights over the drainage of the Bann. Most of them seemed to look on the Irish as a pampered people living largely at the expense of the English taxpayer. Finding that they regarded Ireland mainly as a nuisance, I concluded in the course of a few months that it would be better for the country to be governed by people who were, at least, interested in it. That, however, was the beginning, not the end of my conversion. The conversion became complete only on the day on which I went to see Syngé's *Riders to the Sea* at the Royalty Theatre. That, again, was a mystical experience, but, none the less, I immediately set out to try to convert everybody I knew to my opinion by process of argument. My arguments, I may say without vanity, were so convincing that they would have got through the hide of a pachyderm, but they never got through the hides of my friends. The human being is all but argument-proof.

This is obvious if you consider the results of all the public debates that have been held since the beginning of time. Take, for example, the debates in the House of Commons. Were Disraeli's supporters ever known to throw in the towel because Gladstone had felled him with an unanswerable argument? What would Mr. Baldwin's followers think, except that he was mad, if he suddenly got up and announced that Mr. Attlee had defeated him in argument and that henceforth he would take his place as a private soldier in the ranks of the Labour Party? Ever since the days of Demosthenes and Aeschines, it has been taken for granted that no eminent man is ever converted by an opponent by process of debate. Even in those old-fashioned debates which used to be held between humble Atheists and humble Christians, the leading Christian and the leading Atheist always went home with their opinions unchanged. In view of this, I have sometimes wondered whether it would not be a good thing to have referees at debates, as at football matches and at boxing matches, who would decide when one side had scored or when one of the opponents had received a knock-out blow. At present, each side is left to believe that it has scored a smashing victory. I should like to see the loser, not only publicly declared to be the loser, but compelled to go over to the other side.

It may be urged, however, that public debates achieve their object, not by the conversion of the leaders on either side but by the conversion of their more open-minded followers. Among people of real convictions, these open-minded followers are known as wobblers; and a wobbler who has yielded to argument is known to the party he has left as a turncoat. How suspicious people are of a politician who has listened to reason and so deserted their party for another! Yet, if we believe in controversy, we should honour the wobbler and the turncoat above all others. These are the men who put reason above prejudice, and have the honesty to admit that they have been beaten by arguments better than their own. They are men who are not afraid of their

own past, and are glad to feel that what they say in 1936 is different from the nonsense they talked in 1913. Their opponents do not feel like this, however. They say, 'Just for a handful of silver he left us,' or something of that kind. They say it sometimes with truth, but, whether it is true or not, they say it.

Considering the number of wobblers there are in the world, it is perhaps not surprising that we go on arguing as we do in parliaments and on platforms. A large audience will probably contain at least one or two reasonable men. What particularly astonishes me, however, is that we go on arguing just as hotly in private life—arguing with people who have not the remotest resemblance to reasonable men—people who would not show the faintest sign of wobbling if Socrates and St. Thomas Aquinas made a combined and overwhelming assault on them. Again and again I find myself arguing passionately with men who are not open to argument and whom I know I could no more convert by arguments than I could turn a stone into butter. They are men, I tell myself, so steeped in illusion that they can believe almost anything so long as it is not quite true. Yet I go on trying, vainly, to outshout them, and to blow down the flag of illusion with a mighty wind of argument. In cold blood I realise that this is very foolish—that, for all the effect my argument produced, I might as well be the street-evangelist whom I once saw preaching salvation with no audience but a lamp-post.

No doubt they feel much the same about me. I, too, am not exactly open to argument—at least, not to the only sort of arguments other people seem to be able to think of. Yet who that is of an argumentative disposition has ever given up hope? To the genuinely argumentative man every other human being remains a potential convert while alive. I have known enthusiastic youths who would spend a whole evening trying to convert an octogenarian miser to the moral beauty of Socialism. I have heard a Free Trader in a public-house fanatically expounding the case for

Free Trade to a tipsy bookmaker who could scarcely pronounce the word 'whisky.' We are all born canvassers for our causes, and are all the more deserving of admiration because we go on canvassing without ever turning a vote.

Is controversy entirely useless, then? I do not think so. For one thing, it clears the controversialist's mind and so enables him gradually to become a more lucid exponent of his creed. For another thing, it keeps ideas in the air; and it is by these ideas, not by immediate arguments that men in the end are mystically converted, or, if you prefer, the word, infected. Finally, controversy is a very good sport. It is because it is a good sport that I wish a referee had been present in my house on Sunday night to decide who won in the great welter-weight argument between Paddy Freeman and Al Communismo.

2. ONE'S HABITS

At a west of England hotel at which I was staying, a waiter came up to me with a half-finished packet of cigarettes, and said: 'Are these your cigarettes, sir?' I told him that I did not know, and asked him where he had found them. 'They were on the writing desk in the corner,' he said; 'I think they must be yours, sir, because the packet has been opened at the top.' 'Why, what other way is there of opening a packet of cigarettes?' I asked. 'Well, sir,' he replied, as deferentially informative as Jeeves himself, 'you see, most gentlemen tear the paper wrapping off before opening the packet, but I took particular notice that you never take the wrapping off but just open the packet at the top. Didn't you know, that, sir?' I confess I was amazed. Here was a Sherlock Holmes in a remote part of England who in the course of three days could tell me things about my habits that I did not know myself. I had never before realized either that I habitually opened cigarette packets in one particular way or that my particular way differentiated me from the mass of civilized mankind. I had always thought of myself as a creature of few habits, and those mostly bad; yet here I was exposed as a slave of habit even in so trifling a matter as getting the first cigarette out of a new packet.

It is not that I am theoretically an enemy of habit. In my opinion, no greater nonsense was ever talked than Pater's observation that 'in a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits.' There may be a germ of half-truth in the saying, but no man who has had the misfortune not to be able to form habits will accept it at its face-value. I myself suffer daily as a result of never having formed habits even in such simple things as putting money, tickets, and such things in one particular pocket. It is perfectly absurd to know that one has plenty of money on one's person and yet not to be able to find it without making as much fuss as if one were chasing biting insects all over one's body. In shops, restaurants, and elsewhere in such

circumstances, the sensitive man feels that the shopkeeper, waiter, or occupant of the cash-desk is observing him with suspicion, disguised as a patient smile and wondering—especially in restaurants—whether the whole thing is not a deliberate try-on. Many years ago I had the humiliating experience of having to leave my name and address at a Piccadilly restaurant because, though I knew I had money in some pocket or other, I could not find it when it came to paying the bill. A friend of mine, once noticing the haphazard way in which I kept paper-money in my various pockets, much of it lost among a medley of letters and other documents in my breast-pocket, said to me: 'You have no sense about money. You don't know how to keep it,' and presented me with a note-case, when I was on the eve of going abroad. I put all my paper-money into the note-case, feeling that I was a practical man at last. Within a week, unfortunately, a still more practical pickpocket—one of those foreigners—managed to get hold of the note-case and robbed me of a far larger sum than any pickpocket had ever succeeded in taking from me in my more unpractical days.

You may think that this should have converted me to a disbelief in habit, tidiness, order and so forth. If you do, you are wrong. The most that it converted me to was a belief that there is something to be said on both sides of the question. I am convinced, for example, that in the ordinary affairs of life the man who knows in which pocket his money is, is in a vastly superior position to the man who does not know in which pocket his money is, and yet that, in relation to pickpockets, the man who does not know in which pocket his money is, is the more fortunate. For, if a man himself does not know where his money is, how can a passing stranger know? I have sat up all night in the smoking-room of a boat with a friendly stranger who, I afterwards heard, was a pickpocket, and he might have been the Archbishop of Canterbury for all he took from me. The only effective way of picking my pockets would be to sandbag me, and even then it would take a long time to

find the money. I warn potential sandbaggers, however, that as a rule I have little more money about me than will cover the expenses of a quiet citizen's day.

Apart from money, there is everything to be said for habit. How foolish it is, for example, for the man who travels by bus or train not always to put his ticket into the same pocket! He who does so can alone face ticket-inspectors with equanimity. With him the production of a ticket is a matter of routine, and the whole thing passes like magic. The man who cannot find his ticket, however—what a nuisance he is to himself and to everybody else! I always think, when he isn't myself, that he looks such a fool. Sometimes I pity him for his flustered helplessness: sometimes, as he plunges desperately into one pocket after another, his lack of dignity and his waste of precious moments through sheer incompetence irritate me. He seems a particularly poor specimen of the human race, and all through lack of a little system. I feel like asking him whether he hasn't a ticket-pocket and, if he has, what he thinks the tailor gave him a ticket-pocket for. On such occasions, I am all on the side of the man of habit, sneering and jeering at a weaker brother. Talking of ticket-pockets, by the way, reminds me that in my latest suit my tailor has forgotten to include one. At first I resented the omission, but, on second thoughts, I realized that the tailor had done me a good turn. If I lose a ticket in the future, I shall now have one pocket fewer in which to lose it.

Then there are spectacles. How enviable is the man who can always produce his reading-glasses at a moment's notice—who has formed the habit of carrying them in one particular pocket—who can even be sure that, when he leaves the house, he will find them in any pocket at all! For myself, I should not like to be asked to add up all the minutes I have wasted looking for my spectacles in the course of a year. The total, if it would not stagger humanity, would certainly stagger me. So uncertain am I of remembering my spectacles that I am compelled to carry an eyeglass

as a substitute for an emergency. Talk about the slave of habit! The true galley-slave is the man who, because he is not the slave of habit, is always mislaying things and hunting for them.

I am especially conscious of this when I want to consult a book. I have a considerable number of books and a great love of seeing books well arranged, with every volume in its allotted place—everything necessary, indeed, to an orderly student except the habit of putting a book back on the shelf when I am finished with it. As a result, I spend almost as much time in looking for books as in reading them. If I want to verify a quotation from Browning, the volume that contains the passage is always the volume that is missing. If I want something in the first volume of Mr. E. V. Lucas's *Life of Charles Lamb*, I can find only the second. I see dictionaries all over the house when I am looking for something else, but, when at a crisis I crave for a dictionary more than any other book in the world, all the dictionaries seem to have melted into thin air. It is as though my books were inspired with a spirit of mischief and took their revenge on me for my carelessness by wasting my time in a never-ending game of hide-and-seek. The very Bible hides from me when I want to read it.

Hence I praise above all others the life of habit, order, and discipline, and I disagree vehemently with Montaigne when he declares that 'a young man should break in upon his rules, to stir up energy and keep it from becoming mouldy and lazy; for no course of life is so foolish and feeble as that which is carried out according to rules and discipline.' This may have been good enough advice for gentlemen of private means in the sixteenth century, but it is of no use to a generation that has discovered the beauty of machines and must more and more conform itself to the beautiful and orderly ways of machines. Give me the train that starts punctually, the clock that habitually tells the right time, the man who breakfasts at eight sharp every morning and always carries his ticket in the same pocket. To live like

a machine in all those matters does not matter—this is to live successfully. To live mechanically is to be a free spirit, unclogged by the constant necessity of turning aside from the proper business of life to engage in a silly hunt for books and spectacles. I thank my stars that I have at least one habit, if it is only the habit of opening a cigarette-packet in one particular way. It is a small thing, but may it not be the seed of a punctuality, order, and discipline that will ultimately spread through my whole being? All is not lost. The west-country waiter has given me hope.

3. A LOVE THAT LASTS

It is difficult to be sure what one loved first as a child. As one looks back, the world of infancy seems full of beautiful things, each of them loved to distraction—egg-cosies, bed-knobs, horses (toy and real), ships (toy and real), cousins, hens, pigs, swallows, silver spoons used as mirrors, prismatic glass ornaments on the mantelpiece, gaily coloured transfers, the sea, rivers, tiny waterfalls, puddles in the road, butterflies, bread-and-butter-and-jam, cakes, sweets, lump sugar, bridges with trains pounding across them overhead, shops, sunbeams with the dust dancing in them in the nursery, uncles and aunts, gooseberries in the garden, sardines, picture-books, rain trickling down the windowpane, snow, the moon, men smoking, men shaving, women knitting and crocheting—if I doubled the length of the catalogue, I should not even then have named half the things that had won my heart before I was ten years old.

I wonder, however, whether I loved any of these things more than I loved money. I cannot remember a time when I did not feel the happier for the possession of a coin. Even a penny gave wings to my heels and sped me on the way to the small sweet-shop where paradise could be had, poured into twist of paper. Nor was a half penny itself to be despised, for in those days dates as well as sweets could be bought by the halfpennyworth—by the farthingworth, too, if my memory is to be trusted. I liked coins, however, it seems to me, even apart from what they could buy. A French ten-centime piece I should have loved for its own sake. To feel a coin in one's palm was to be conscious of a magical influence. Not that the value of the coin was a matter of no moment. If a stranger had given me a penny instead of a two-shilling piece, he would have fallen in my esteem, and I should have missed that satisfying thrill that the passing of money from one hand to another gives. All the best strangers I knew, relations and others, gave two-shilling pieces, and by doing so implanted in me at an early age a love of my kind. Even at the present

day, when I fall into a pessimistic mood about the human race, I have only to recall those donations of my childhood in order to recover the conviction that men and women are in many respects human.

You might conclude that so passionate a coin-lover as I was a predestined saver of money. The only way to save money however, was to hide it in a money-box. And the only place I cared to have money was in my hand or in my pocket. Money in my money-box seemed to me to be no more really mine than money in anybody else's money-box. It was impossible to get at it except secretly with a chisel. It was like having a beautiful picture which one was never allowed to see except through a key-hole. Yet, if one keeps money in one's pocket, the melancholy truth is that, however much one loves it, one cannot keep it long. In the pocket a two-shilling piece is as restless as a skylark in a cage. One can almost feel it fluttering as one approaches a shop window. 'Let me out,' it seems to plead: 'I'm suffocating here.' And I have a notion that, even against his own will, the will-to-escape of a coin in the pocket often compels a child to walk in the direction of a shop and to give it its liberty.

Those who save money are often accused of loving money; but, in my opinion, those who love money most are those who spend it. To them money is not merely a list of dead figures in a bank-book. It is an animate thing, spasmodically restless like the birds in a wood, taking wings to itself, as the poet has said. Money, to the man who enjoys spending, is the perfect companion—a companion all the dearer because it never outstays its welcome. It is responsive to his every mood. While in his pocket, it gives him serene confidence so that, even when a guest in a restaurant shows an unexpected preference for the most expensive dishes and drinks, he is as undismayed as the just man in Horace. He can go anywhere in the world, holding his head up. He can come through a black day at Ascot with a smile. He can also indulge those fine passions—greed, vanity, and ostentation—

to his heart's content; and, be he the merest wastrel who has never by his own exertions earned a penny in his life, he yet has a magic about him that makes him superior and feel superior, to the vast majority of his fellows. I have long been convinced that carrying a well-filled note-case on the person has a more invigorating effect even than wearing an iodine locket. The iodine locket affects only the body: the full note-case affects body, mind, and soul, exhilarating all three to such a point that even a fool with money in his pocket would not change places with Socrates. .

It is a wise instinct, then, in the child that makes its eyes brighten at the touch of money. Here at least, amid all our fleeting affections, is something that can be loved as ardently at the age of eighty as at eight. Of how many of the things that we loved in the nursery can this be said? The enthusiastic jam-eater of six grows into the dyspeptic jam-avoider of sixty. Present an octogenarian with a rocking-horse on his birthday, and he will think you have gone mad. It no longer gives me pleasure to see my face reflected in a spoon, to blow soap-bubbles, or to try to put salt on the tail of a swallow. Egg-cosies are to me now mere utilities, not profoundly moving works of art. I no longer run to railway bridges in order to experience the rapture of hearing trains thundering over my head. Even feeding hens has lost its attractiveness, and I can now watch a man shaving and feel no stirrings of awe and wonder as I watch. Age alas, has blotted out half that world of passionate delight in which I once lived, and to many of the things I once loved I have grown indifferent. The love of money however, remains. So much do I love it that I feel almost a different person when I have money in my pocket and when I have none. Let me have but money, and, for the time being I am back among the ardent attachments and illusions of the nursery.

From all this I am inclined to conclude that the love of money is a form of infantilism. The man who loves money is a man who has never grown up. He has never passed from the world of fairy tales into the world of philosophy

(for philosophy, which is the wisdom of the grown man in contrast with the wonder of the child, is as contemptuous of money as it is of jam, sweets, and bed-knobs). Money, according to the philosophers, is dross, filthy lucre, an impediment rather than an aid to true happiness. Those who retain the nursery imagination throughout life, however, cannot be persuaded of this. Money they regard as the loveliest gift ever bestowed on a mortal by the wand of a fairy godmother. They are like boys dreaming of a Treasure Island; and their money-bags become almost as dear to them—sometimes, dearer than—their country.

4. THE ART OF FORGETTING

Memory-training courses are much in vogue nowadays, and it seems to be taken for granted that the more things we remember the happier we are. The pleasures of memory must certainly be rated high, but I am sure forgetfulness also plays a part in making human beings happy. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth would have given a good deal to be able to forget the murder of Duncan, and many a politician has longed to be allowed to forget his election pledges. Some of the unhappiest people in the world are those who cannot forget injuries inflicted on them in the past. Others are equally miserable because they cannot forget wrongs they have done others. Human beings are so constituted, indeed, that they forget the things they would like to remember, and remember the things they would prefer to forget. The memory should be trained, I think, to overcome both these weaknesses.

Forgetting, indeed, is not a simple matter. Psychologists will have to devote years of profound study to the matter before they can instruct us with confidence in the art of forgetting. How long it will be, for example, before they are able even to persuade human beings that forgetfulness is necessary to happiness! Yet it ought to be obvious that memory can be one of the greatest evils on earth, whether to an individual or to a people. The remembrance of grievances is a poison that embitters the blood. The Sicilian vendetta was simply the result of a good memory. With nations a good memory is as often as not a curse. The Boer War began with the cry, 'Remember Majuba!' The Abyssinian War began with the cry, 'Remember Adowa!' History, I think, will decide that it would have been much better to forget Majuba and to forget Adowa; but nations will not be persuaded into forgetfulness. Sir Horace Plunkett once said of Irish history that it was a thing that Englishmen should remember and Irishmen should forget; and by this he meant that nations should remember the wrongs they have inflicted and forget the wrongs they have endured.

The trouble is, of course, that memory often acts in exactly the opposite way. We remember only what we wish to remember, and this is usually the sufferings we have endured, not the sufferings we have inflicted. A Scotsman once said to me that the greatness of England was largely due to the fact that Englishmen, above all other races, possess the gift of forgetting. They are, he said, a practical people who, after a war is over, regard the matter as closed and realize that, if the world is to become normal again, they must forget most of the things they once said and indeed knew about their enemies.

There is clearly no nation that could ever have settled down into orderly life unless it had deliberately forgotten a good many things. The United States of America would have been as volcanic as the Balkans if the Americans had allowed themselves to remember too much about the Civil War. Northern Ireland, I think, would be a happier place to-day but for the curse of memory. Memory is the inspiration of great peoples, but it is a most misleading guide in politics. There is a time for remembering the past and a time for forgetting it. If everybody remembered the past, nobody would ever forgive anybody.

Memory, unfortunately, is an arbitrary thing and we shall never train it properly till we realize that it has a vicious as well as a noble aspect—that to forget a grievance is as commendable as to remember a benefit. Yet every one does, I suppose, realize at least that to be in the company of a man brooding over his grievances is boredom without a parallel. It is perhaps unfair for me to criticize such a man, for no one ever did me a great wrong, and I have nothing in that line to remember. Still, when he is with me, I cannot help wishing that he would lose his memory or go elsewhere with it. Henceforth, knowing of the virtues of the cinema as a drug, I will draw up a list of comic films and cut him short by advising him to go and see them. 'I'll never forgive him,' he will say, and I will respond with, 'Have you seen Rookery Nook?' 'No' he will say, 'but he

played me a dirty trick and I've got my knife in him. You'll see'; and I will answer: 'Why not take your sister to see the new Laurel and Hardy?' And, if that fails, I will advise him to go home and turn on his wireless when the dance band is playing and bellow 'Little Old Lady,' 'The Old Village Choir,' and the rest of the choruses till his lungs ache and the police knock at the door to see what is the matter. If bellowing at the wireless is an aid to forgetfulness, the more bellowing there is the better. I wish all Europe, from Herr Hitler down, would take to this form of bellowing. Then, having forgotten everything that it is better not to remember, we might have some chance of peace.

5. A DISAPPOINTED MAN

A blind man, having received his sight as the result of a remarkable operation, confessed the other day that he was so disappointed in the world he saw that he wondered whether he was not happier when he was blind. Human beings were of a different shape and appearance from those with which his imagination had endowed them. Everything apparently, from motor cars to flower gardens, fell short of the glorious images he had made of them. The gift of sight brought him merely disillusionment.

It is easy to understand his distress. Most of us have experienced the same sense of disillusionment when we have for the first time seen with our eyes something that we had hitherto idealised in our imagination. I remember being deeply disappointed in the first lion I saw. Until then I had regarded him as the King of Beasts and had attributed to him a size and majesty such as have never belonged to any real lion. The lion in the cage at the menagerie seemed to be only about one-third the size of the lion of my dreams, and he bore few marks of regality. Life in a cage in a travelling menagerie does not, I fancy, conduce to kingliness of bearing. The lion, however, was not the only beast that fell below my expectations. The elephant himself was only a miniature of what I had imagined, and the camel a small, seedy, turkey-like animal with very little of the romance of the desert about him.

It may be that children exaggerate size in their imaginary pictures of animals they have not seen. They believe that lions and tigers belong to a gigantic animal world in comparison with which the everyday domestic animals are little more than dwarfs. They romanticise the very big and the very little, and are disenchanted by what seems to them rather ordinary bulk. I myself, I confess, was disappointed in my first sight of London, not because London was not big enough, but because the buildings were not bigger. How modestly tiny Westminster Abbey seemed! How little of the grandiose there was in those days in the face of the

Strand! There were famous theatres that were smaller than the theatres in my native city. As for Buckingham Palace, I am not sure whether it was because of its inadequate size that I was disappointed in the building, but it was certainly not my idea of a palace. Before one has seen a palace, the word 'palace' is extraordinarily romantic. One thinks of a palace as a building more wonderful than any other building except, perhaps, a cathedral. To the imagination it expresses the glory of the world, not only in its towering bulk, but in the reckless splendour of its ornaments and its illuminations. It is such a palace as exists only in fairy-tales—a palace worthy of Cinderella. And Buckingham Palace was not that.

In order to appreciate the beauty of existing things, I suspect one has to get used to them. Familiarity, they say, breeds contempt, but it also breeds liking. In this part of the world most of us are familiar with horses from our childhood, and so—apart from the betting-ring—we have never been disappointed in horses. We have never conjured up the picture of an ideal horse quite unlike a real horse and then complained that the real horse was ugly in comparison with it. Yet if one had been brought up in a horseless island, and knew nothing of horses except from legends of their speed and strength and beauty, might one not have made such a fantastically false, if beautiful, picture of a horse for oneself that one would have been shocked by one's first sight of Golden Miller even at Cheltenham? 'This,' one might well have said, 'is not the horse of my dreams.' The man who has never seen a horse before expects too much from the first sight of one: he expects it even to be unlike a horse. Familiarity, however, has taught the rest of us what to expect in a horse, and to admire it for being what it is, even to the Wordsworthian countenance. On the other hand, I have heard an Englishman declare that he was disappointed in his first sight of an Arab horse. Ever since learning 'The Arab's Farewell to His Steed' at school he had loved an imaginary Arab horse which was like the finest kind of English race-horse, and the short necked Arab animal he saw seemed to him unworthy of the name of 'steed.'

It is possible that, if we could be transported back into the Middle Ages, many of us would also be disappointed in the appearance of the horses which the knights rode into battle. Were these great war-horses really as beautiful as the cavalry-horses of modern times? I have been told by a man who professes to know something of the subject that the medieval war-horse, unlike the charger in nineteenth-century war pictures, was a heavy lumbering brute of a kind that would nowadays be put to work on a farm. Even the knights might have been disappointing. The eye is more realistic than the imagination, and realism is usually the way of disillusionments.

We can avoid disappointment only by not expecting the wrong thing and by not expecting too much. Too great anticipation is often the enemy of pleasure. How often has our enjoyment of a good book been injured by our having been led to expect to find it a masterpiece! I am sure I have been disappointed in more good films than bad films simply because good films are so rare that they are enormously overpraised. The photography and the acting may be up to your anticipations, but how often the imaginative substance of the piece is as commonplace as that of a Victorian novelette! At a bad film, however, from which you expect nothing, you often find yourself delighted by some unexpected comic situation or piece of good acting. There is much to be said for confining your visits to the cinema to bad or mediocre plays: it will spare you many a disappointment.

Every traveller or tourist has known at some time or other the pangs of disappointed anticipation and the pleasures of the unexpected. Oscar Wilde was disappointed in the Atlantic Ocean, and other men have been disappointed in the Taj Mahal and in the Mosque at Cordova. People with ardent imaginations invent for themselves largely false pictures of famous and beautiful places, and then complain bitterly that the famous and beautiful places are unlike the pictures. I have met people who jeered at Clovelly merely

because they had heard of its beauty before they visited it. If they had come on it unexpectedly as an unknown place I am sure they would have been entranced by it. I was so fortunate as to visit Clovelly for the first time after hearing it dispraised, and, expecting nothing, was enabled to realize that it is a village that men and women would travel two days and nights to see if it were not in England. I myself, however, have for some time past given up expecting a famous place to be like what I expect it to be like, and so am seldom painfully disappointed. I once committed the sin of being disappointed in Rome, because its appearance did not turn out to be in accordance with my forecast. To-day it causes me no dismay to find my prophetic visions falsified. I make a quiet mental readjustment, and try to be interested—occasionally with success—in things as they are.

In time, no doubt, the man cured of blindness will become equally philosophic. He will learn not to expect every human face to be as beautiful as a face seen in a dream. He will learn not to be surprised to see marks of cunning, greed and cruelty here and there on the faces he passes in the street, and not to feel woebegone because every man has not the face of a Greek god and every woman the face of a Helen. He will learn to take for granted ugly houses in ugly streets and to be grateful because some beautiful houses are left. And, after surveying the hideousness of the world, he will emerge from the depths and see that, in spite of ribbon development, slag-heaps, and some far from attractive faces, the world in spring is nevertheless beautiful.

Or it may be that the man cured of blindness is right in refusing to come to terms with facts and in demanding a world not beautiful in shreds and patches, but as beautiful as the world of his fancy. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure that the man's ideal world would strike us as being more beautiful than the world we know. The fact is that other people's beautiful things and places are often to the rest of us the most disappointing things and places on earth. Who has ever wanted to live in anybody else's Utopia?

J. B. PRIESTLEY

I. IN CRIMSON SILK

You will probably declare roundly that I ought not to have bought them in the first place. But I regret nothing. I realize, even better than you do, that there was, of course, no sense in the affair. Whoever crimson silk pyjamas are intended for, they are certainly not intended for me. I am not the kind of man who robes himself sumptuously in the night watches, and for years now I have crept to my bed or down to the bathroom in the demurest shades, the most self-effacing of pale blue stripes. My friends, men of a not always happy candour, have told me more than once that I look as if I sleep in my clothes, and I have no doubt that I look even dingier at night than I do during the day. Probably if they saw me in my pyjamas they would say that I looked as if I had spent all day in them. But not only were these gorgeous red things obviously not the kind of pyjamas I usually wear, they were also quite superfluous because I had no need of another pair. An extra suit of pyjamas, of course, will always—as people say—“come in,” but you could hardly imagine these opulent, regal garments merely coming in, wistfully awaiting their turn at the bottom of a drawer. Emphatically their purchase cannot be justified by common sense, but considered, as it should be considered, as a romantic gesture, a wave of defiance to the greyness and dullness of things, it was, I think, by no means contemptible.

It was a grey day, had been indeed a grey week; nothing outside the day's routine had happened for some time; and it did not look as if anything would ever happen again. My body had gone on dressing, and undressing itself, eating, drinking, smoking, pushing itself into buses and trains, floundering heavily into large chairs, had gone in short, through all its little repertoire of tricks; but the rest of me, mind, spirit or soul, appeared to be on the point of hibernat-

ing. There I was then, going about my business drearily this grey morning, when suddenly in passing a shop window I caught sight of a pair of crimson silk pyjamas, or rather of flame and treasure and lost sunsets, the gorgeous East in fee. They were not things meekly soliciting in a shop window, but an event, a challenge, a blast of sartorial trumpets. The sun and the wind, the stars in their courses, had conspired together to produce a world of dirty monochrome, in which nothing could possibly happen, and we had all weakly bowed to their decision with one grand exception, the gentlemen's outfitters, who realizing that their moment had arrived, made a gesture of defiance and evolved these pyjamas, to burn there, ruby-red. I knew at once that my own moment had also arrived. There are occasions in a man's existence when he must make something happen, must fling a splash of colour into his life, or some part of him, perhaps the boy in him, will perish flying broken before the grey armies of age, timidity or boredom.

These are brave words, but candour compels me to add that if the shopman had even flicked a derisive eyelid when I inquired about those pyjamas, they would never have been mine. I am prepared to stand facing the dark tide of circumstance, making romantic gestures of defiance, but I am not prepared to stand before a counter looking a fool. However, I never saw the faintest tremor. His manner instantly set me at ease, for he produced the pyjamas with that air of grave approval, as if to say, "It is not for me to comment on your admirable taste, sir, but it is evident that you and I think alike on these matters," that air, which is the secret of all old and expensive shops. He spread the crimson bravery on the counter, lovingly fingered the material, pointed out this and that, and then mentioned the price, a figure by no means unworthy of that regal magnificence, mentioned it as a mere after-thought, a curious little fact that might possibly interest me. I said I would take them along myself, and watched him fold them away into a neat paper package. For the remainder of that morning I might

have been seen as a dullish solid-looking citizen clutching a small and apparently uninteresting parcel. In reality I was a kind of wild poet who had just had one adventure and would have another at the day's end, who carried with him through all the city's grey tides some night robes as vivid as a sunset, spoil of Tyre and Sidon.

My other adventure was, of course, putting them on that night. That was three days ago, but even now there is still some faint thrill in going to bed or waking in the morning, for naturally I have been enjoying my appearance in an entirely new part. Clad in crimson silk, I feel a very different person, my thoughts adapting themselves to my outward magnificence. As I survey my lustrous blood-red length at night, as I wake in the morning to see two arms that might have come from a pagoda in festival stretching before me, another personality is super-imposed upon the one I know so well. I feel a wicked luxurious fellow, with Nubian slaves, a torture chamber, and a huddle of shrinking Circassian beauties, round the corner. If I had to speak, I should do it in King Cambyses's vein. I am hand in glove with the Borgias. I enjoy the thought that the poor and honest are suffering, and am all for whipping the dogs. Strong, ruthless, beautiful, I stand high above common morality and look down with a cruel smile upon the whimpering herd. Men are my counters, women my playthings, and I own no god but myself. And then, having doffed or forgotten the pyjamas, I turn back again, dwindle if you will, into the rather timid, respectable and not unkindly citizen known to my family and friends.

The least thing, it would seem, will ring up the curtain on these mental histrionics. I have only to be given one of those enormous and very expensive cigars by means of which companies are merged and dividends declared, and immediately I find myself turning into a different person. The mouth through which this costly smoke slowly dribbles seems to expand and turn grim. I feel rich, powerful, rather cynical and sensual, one who looks with narrowed eyes at

the poor virtuous fools of this world. But put me, in my shabby clothes, in the middle of a richly dressed and jewelled company, and in a moment I am your stern moralist, your sturdy philosopher, piercing with one glance the hollow shams of life. While they are lighting their cigars (brigands and zanies all of them), I am smoking the honest pipe of Thomas Carlyle and telling them under, by breath that it shall not avail them. Yet I have only to have a Turkish cigarette and a suspicion that the lady beside me (who probably mistakes me for someone else) thinks I am a witty dog, a clever trifler, and there I am, airy, exquisite, now slightly wistful, now mocking, epigrammatizing the world away. But let a genuine fellow of this breed, with a more rapid and heartless flow of epigrams and more superbly-creased trousers (for you must have well-creased trousers for this part and that is one reason why I, who bag dreadfully, can rarely play it), let one of these fellows join us and within a minute or so I have changed again, being now simpler, deeper, more kindly, none of your mere witty triflers but a man with a heart and a brain and a purpose, whose lightest word is worth more than a bushel of epigrams and cheap wit. Thus can cigar, pipe or cigarette play Puck with my personality, wandering dazed in its midsummer wood. Small wonder that a suit of crimson silk should be so potent.

When I consider these and similar drolleries of the mind, for ever ransacking its wardrobes and lumber rooms and dressing up for charades, I wonder more and more at the loud intolerant persons we know so well, who have doubted nothing for years, so supremely confident of knowing all truth and virtue that they are ready, nay, eager to show their fellow creatures the rope and gallows for a word or a gesture. Are they of different stuff from me, made all of a piece? Do they never find their personalities, or at least some part of them veering with the wind of circumstance? Does nothing ever change their point of view, at least in the secret conclaves of the mind? Have they never discovered any touch of the theatre and the masquerade in the day's

grave foolig? If so—and we can never know—then there is some excuse for their amazing confidence in their infallibility, their refusal to be tolerant of any difference in minds. But is it that they are not more but less stable than most of us are, that they are not acting half-a-hundred different parts for a few odd minutes and taking pleasure in the absurd transformations, but are solemnly play-acting all the time, desperately keeping the outward appearance of one consistent character? Perhaps, unknown to us, they are wearing their crimson silk day and night.

2. A ROAD TO ONESELF

Sometimes, on one of these sunny autumn mornings, when I turn my back on the town and take to the highway, I seem to have the world to myself. I walk forward, as it were, into a great sunlit emptiness. Once I am a little way out of the town it is as if the world had been swept clean of men. I pass a few young mothers, who are proudly ushering their round-eyed solemn babes into the presence of the morning sun, a lumbering cart or two, and maybe a knot of labourers, who look up from their task with humorous resignation in their faces; these and others I overtake and pass by, and then there is often an end of my fellows. I alone keep a lounging tryst with the sun, himself, I fancy, a mighty, genial idler and the father of all dreamers and idlers among men.

A light mist covers the neighbouring hills, which are almost imperceptible, their shapes and colours showing but faintly, so that they seem to stand aloof—things of dream. As I go further along the shining road I seem to be lounging into a vast, empty room. There are sights and sounds in plenty; cows looking over the walls with their great, mournful eyes; here and there a thin blue column of smoke; the cawing of rooks about the decaying woods; and, distantly sounding, the creak of a cart, a casual shout or two, a vague hammering, and, more distant still, the noise of the town, now the faint murmur of a hive. Yet to me, coming from the crowded, tumultuous streets, it seems empty because I meet no one by the way. The road, for all its thick drift of leaves, deep gold and brown, at either side, seems to lie naked in the sunshine, and I drink in this unexpected solitude as eagerly as a dusty traveller takes his ale. For a time, it comes as a delectable and quickening draught, and though outwardly a sober, meditative, almost melancholy pedestrian, I hold high festival in the spirit, drink deep, and revel with the younger gods.

One of the greatest dangers of living in large towns is that we have too many neighbours, and human fellowship

is too cheap. We are apt to become wearied of humanity; a solitary green tree sometimes seems dearer to us than an odd thousand of our fellow-citizens. Unless we are hardened, the millions of eyes begin to madden us; and for ever pushed and jostled by crowds we begin to take more kindly to Malthus, and are even willing to think better of Herod and other wholesale depopulators. We begin to hate the sight of men who would appear, as gods to us if we met them in Turkestan or Patagonia. When we have become thoroughly crowd-sick, we feel that the continued presence of these thousands of other men and women will soon crush, stamp, or press our unique, miraculous individuality into some vile pattern of the streets; we feel that the spirit will perish for want of room to expand in: and we gasp for an air, untainted by crowded humanity.

Some such thoughts as these come to me, at first, in my curious little glimpse of solitude. I am possessed by an ampler mood than men commonly know, and feel that I can fashion the world about me to my changing whims; my spirit overflows, and seems to fill the quiet drooping countryside with sudden light and laughter; the empty road and vacant fields, the golden atmosphere and blue spaces are my kingdoms, and I can people them at will with my fancies. Beautiful snatches of poetry come into my head, and I repeat a few words, or even only one word, aloud and with passionate emphasis, as if to impress their significance and beauty upon a listening host. Sometimes I break into violent little gusts of laughter, for my own good pleasure. At other times I sing, loudly and with abandon: to a petrified audience of one cow and three trees I protest melodiously that Phyllis has such charming graces that I could love her till I die, and I believe it, too, at the time. I brag to myself, and applaud and flatter myself. I even indulge in one or two of those swaggering day-dreams of boyhood in which one finds oneself suddenly raised to some extraordinary eminence, the idol of millions, a demi-god among men, from which height one looks down with kindly scorn on those myopic

persons who did not know true greatness when they saw it, sarcastic schoolmasters and jeering relatives for the most part.

Only by such heightened images, seemingly more applicable to centuries of riotous life than half an hour's sauntering, can I suggest in stubborn words the swelling mood that first comes to me with this sudden, unexpected seclusion.

But as the morning wears away, the jubilation arising from this new expansion of oneself dwindles and perishes; the spirit wearies of its play. The road stretches out its vacant length, a few last leaves come fluttering down and the sun grows stronger, sharpening the outline of the hills. The day is lovelier than ever. But I met no one by the way, and even the distant sounds of men's travail and sport have died down. After a time the empty road and silent valley become vaguely disquieting like a great room spread for a feast, blazing with lights, opulent in crimson and gold, and yet all deserted and quiet as the grave. I ask myself if all men have been mewed up in offices and underground warehouses, by some ghastly edict, unknown to me, which has come into force this very morning. Have I alone escaped? Or I wonder if the Last Day has dawned, and been made plain to men not by sound of trump, but by some sign in the sky that I have overlooked; a vast hand may have beckoned to all men or the heavens may have opened while I was busy lighting my pipe. Have all but one of the weary children of earth been gathered to their long rest? I walk in loneliness.

Suddenly, I see a tiny moving figure on the road before me, and immediately it focuses my attention. What are walls, fields, trees, and cows compared with this miraculous thing; a fellow human being, played upon by the same desires and passions, his head stuffed with the same dreams and fluttering thoughts? In one of the world's greatest romances is not the most breathless moment concerned with the discovery of a human footprint in the sand? Does not the world's story begin with one human being meeting another? As I keep my eyes fixed on the nearing figure the

last of my vague fancies and egotistical imaginings are blown away; my mind is engrossed by the solidly romantic possibilities of the encounter. Just as I was glad to escape from the sight and sound of men, so I am eager now to break my solitude: the circle is complete. And as we came up together, the stranger and I, I give him a loud greeting, and he, a little startled, returns the salute; and so we pass on, fellow-travellers and nameless companions in a great adventure, knowing no more of each other than the brief sight of a face, the sound of a voice can tell us. We only cry out a Hail and Farewell through the mist, yet I think we go on our way a little heartened.

3. ON GOSSIP

Any and every kind of tittle-tattle goes by the name of gossip, no matter whether the subject is the price of cauliflowers or the foreign policy of Chile, or—darkening to scandal—the weather. In this place, I would limit gossip to that discussion of other people's characters and affairs which is so well known to us, and to every other society. And I would call it scandal and have done with it, only scandal is a dog with a very bad name while gossip still capers and frisks, unchecked though not encouraged. There is also this distinction: we—that is, you and I—may condescend to gossip: it is the others who talk scandal.

Now this personal kind of gossip is everywhere condemned and is everywhere an unfailing recreation. It began with the wild gestures and uncouth jabbering of our remote ancestors, squatting in their caves; perhaps it will end only when the last fire is quenched. Wise men, priests, philosophers, and prophets have thundered against it, but their very imprecations only floated about as flotsam and jetsam on the vast ocean of gossip; their very names have come down to us only as a whispered rumour. The stream of talk flows on, and as yet no denunciations have dammed it up. Gossip is an endless game without rules; a thing untouched by changing fashions and varying modes of thought; one of the few everlasting diversions of humanity. Men, who have had more say in public if less in private, have always been prompt to accuse women of devoting too much of their time and energy to this dubious sport. Gossip, they have declared, is woman's greatest pastime. But here at least our feminists, who have spluttered over so many imaginary wrongs, have passed by one undoubted grievance, for the truth is, men are as much given to gossiping as women. Man's talk may sound more important because it involves wider interests, yet a good deal of it is nothing more nor less than gossip.

Now it seems to me that in this perpetual chatter about other people, which we all hasten to denounce, but which gives all of us pleasure at some time or other, our delight

springs, broadly speaking, from two main sources, one of which is good and the other bad. And according to which predominates gossip may be described as profitable or hurtful to those people concerned in it.

The good side of gossip arises out of that eager, seemingly insatiable curiosity which distinguishes men from the brutes and civilised men from savages. Much of our idlest chatter is secretly leavened by this curiosity, which is in its purest form a noble thing. For what is the pursuit of knowledge but the play of a splendid but entirely irrational inquisitiveness? Most of the higher branches of knowledge, metaphysics, pure mathematics, and so on, serve no practical purpose; sober philosophers and studious mathematicians are in reality the wildest of fellows, forever pursuing a laborious quest into the absolute Unknown. A great deal of this fine curiosity goes to the making of gossip, which is something more than a casual exchange of news. When we talk over the Smiths and the Browns, not only do we record events, but we examine motives and estimate character, and in a roundabout way we exchange ideas. The greatest historian can do little more; his subject is of more importance, that is all. The difference between Mrs. Jones giving the real reason why the Johnsons left the town so suddenly, and Professor Jones, writing the *Life and Times of Cardinal Richelieu*, is one of degree only; both are undertaking the same kind of work, and probably both are stirred by the same motives. We are all historians without knowing it.

Our gossip and scandal is a grub, which in a hundred years' time, with the advent of the historian, will become a chrysalis; and in four or five hundred years' time, the hard shell will be burst open, and there will be seen the winged splendour of epic poetry or romantic drama. Have not all the subjects of history and epic poetry once been nothing more than eager talk in the court or the kitchen? 'Have you heard the latest?'—the cry went: then followed the pretty little scandal of Helen, wife of Menelaus, and the Troy affair; or perhaps a full account of that queer business of

Prince Hamlet at the Court of Denmark; or the whole story of those strange doings at Verona, in which Montague's son, young Romeo, cut such a figure. The names and stories that were whispered in ante-rooms and bawled out in taverns, centuries ago, will yet provoke future historians, fire poets and romancers yet unborn, and will yet move unknown generations to wild laughter and tears, to anger and pity. How many noble studies have arisen out of this eternal curiosity of men! How many lovely things have flowered from this common soil of Gossip!

The other source of our pleasure in this personal kind of gossip is less innocent; indeed, it is—and ever has been—a great worker of mischief. It proceeds, I believe, from the strain of the Pharisee that is in most of us. When we discuss the weaknesses and misfortunes of others, we are not solely prompted by that spirit of curiosity to which I have referred. Nor is it, as a rule, direct enmity or mere malice that prompts us, for the people we discuss may be almost unknown to us, or on the other hand, they may be old, well-tried friends. But when we are indulging in this sort of talk, we suddenly feel a sense of our own superiority, we glow with added self-respect. Thus, there are four or five of us chattering, and someone mentions the absent Jones, who is a common acquaintance. 'Ah! Poor old Jones!' we exclaim; and are quickly in full cry after the quarry. 'The trouble with old Jones, . . . ' one begins. 'You know, he ought not to have, . . . ' opens the next critic. 'As I've told Jones many a time, . . . ' cries a third. So voice after voice swells the chorus of criticism. The superficial show of concern and sympathy is a mere formality and deceives nobody; everyone is eager to contribute his or her scrap of censure; eyes are brightening, tongues are loosened. That slight but distinctly uncomfortable sense of inferiority which we may possibly have felt in the actual presence of Jones is now compensated for by a marked sense of our own superiority and a glow of self-satisfaction.

Unless we are on our guard, we are ready to sacrifice

victim after victim for the sake of this delectable but transitory feeling. Every night, in countless drawing-rooms, knives are reddened and altars smoke to propitiate this dark god of self-righteousness. And the victim of this dreadful worship is too often young and open-hearted and beautiful—and a woman.

4. ON LIFE AND LUCKY-BAGS

Reader, does your mind ever run back to the time when you were in receipt of a regular allowance, when you could be described almost as a 'person of independent means'? The other day I mused in this vein, and fell to thinking of the day before yesterday, when I was a chubby, pudding-fed lad, and the aforesaid allowance amounted to four shillings and four pence at the end of a year, but was delivered into my hands at the rate of one penny per week. Saturday morning was the appointed time, I believe. Of course, I often received other and larger sums; aunts and uncles were usually good for half-a-crown, or even more, and grandfathers in those days seemed to be literally made of silver coin. But the Saturday penny differed from these occasional presents in that it was my very own; there were no hints of money-boxes and savings-banks and 'rainy-days'; the penny was placed in my hand, and could be used immediately as a sacrifice on the glittering altar of Juvenile Folly. This was very much to my taste, for, like most healthy children, I scorned those doubtful deities, Thrift and Prudence; even now I can hardly bring myself to accord them the worship which is, from what I hear, their due.

A number of my playmates received their weekly pennies at the same time—almost at the same moment, I imagine—and it was our invariable custom to retire in a body to a little shop near by. It was a tiny fancygoods and sweet shop, whose owner must have subsisted almost entirely on the patronage of such small fry as ourselves. To us, as we clustered round the window, it was a veritable land of Heart's Delight, for a penny was a potent talisman in those days and we had the choice of a bewildering array of entirely useless articles. (What do children receive on Saturday mornings these times, I wonder; a ten shilling note or a War Bond?) So, clutching our pennies in warm, moist little hands, we would spend a delicious half-hour gazing through the shop window, a round-eyed, shrill-voiced crowd of speculators until, after much discussion, our minds made

up, we would clatter—one by one—into the shop and come out triumphantly hugging our purchases. The rest was a swift descent into prosaic life. The great moment had come and gone.

Now, sympathetic reader, I will discover to you the depths of my folly. For you must know that some poetic rogue, some Autolycus of the fancy-goods trade, had invented and placed upon the market the thing called the lucky-bag. It was my bane, and the cause of my weekly undoing. Never was there such a snare for an imaginative child! It was a large, sealed paper-packet, bulging auspiciously; it contained articles of great variety, and some, so ran the legend on the cover, were of 'immense value.' Here was wealth, touched with chance and mystery and magic; here was El Dorado within sight. When I add that the price of this marvel was exactly one penny, there is nothing more to be said.

At first we were all victims. But, alas!—nothing of 'immense value' was forthcoming. The packets contained nothing of more importance than some trivial little wooden article, and a few contemptible pink sweets—a vile pennyworth! The bulging, which gave one the idea that the bag was crammed with bulky toys, was caused, I regret to say, by a sheet of stiff brown paper artfully disposed beneath the outer covering. So my companions, worldly wise in their generation, laughed to scorn the wiles of the lucky-bag merchant, and betook themselves to other and more solid purchases—a top, a ball, or a pennyworth of bulls-eyes or toffee. Here they received a pennyworth for a penny and were satisfied.

It was otherwise with me. I wanted the land of Heart's Delight for a penny, and though I have never got it, there were moments when, holding the newly-bought, unopened bag in my hand, I had glimpses of joys beyond mere pennyworths of this and that. Week after week, month after month, the lure of the magic packet held me in thrall. There were times when I would resolve to break my bonds, and

traffic no more with the cheater, the mocker of sweet innocence, but it was all to no purpose; as soon as I approached the fateful shop and caught sight of the bulging packets my resolutions went like smoke, and once again my penny would be swept into the till, and once more I would stand, with heart beating high, looking into the mysterious bag.

And always the same hollow mockery; always the stiff brown paper bringing my dreams to earth. My collection of little wooden egg-cups and tables grew apace; often I nearly made myself sick by trying to find some consolation in the abominable pink sweets. My elders laughed at me, and I was the scorn of my youthful playmates. Yet I think those pennies were well expended, for I moved, unknowingly, in great company—among the happy simpletons on the one hand and the fantastic dreamers on the other. Don Quixote, Parson Adams, Pickwick, and the rest at one elbow; Lully, Paracelsus, and all the other seekers of Philosophers' Stones, Elixirs of Life, and Lands of Gold jostling me on the other side.

So I was in my innocence, and even now when I am 'if a man speak truly, little better than one of the wicked,' I have not changed so much. Though the pennies do not come so easily as of old, the dreams have not yet faded, the magical lights have not yet been quite extinguished; the solid pennyworths still fail to satisfy me, who have been on the very frontiers of El Dorado. So, though the disappointments still come thick and fast, I have my moments, perhaps you, too—?

But I fear my name will never head a subscription list or cause a commotion in Lombard Street. I sometimes think I shall never even be asked to open a bazaar.

5. DIFFERENT INSIDE

I have been misunderstood and wrongly accused so many times that I ought to be able now to shrug my shoulders, not merely suffering in silence, (for I know that protest is useless) but being indifferent, not suffering at all. Yet every other day or so something happens and I see once more what an ill-fated fellow I am. Only last night, for example, when we were playing bridge at my cousin's, she accused me of being far too pleased with myself when I contrived (not unskillfully, let me admit) to be four up in Spades. The fact is, of course, that she was still rather annoyed because she had for once been over-called, she who calls so wildly and unscrupulously and always forgets to pay, or at least forgets to pay me, when she loses. That is not the point, however, and I have no intension of discussing my cousin's fantastic ethics. The trouble is that I know very well she had evidence enough on which to base her accusation. No doubt my face was one vast ill-mannered grin of triumph, a revolting sight, and yet I was not feeling jubilant, ready to crow at my victory, but only mildly pleased with myself. I did not even know I was looking pleased, having forgotten for the moment the tricks my face plays on me. I can well believe, however; that I presented to the company a front that irritated everybody. Are other people, I wonder, as plagued by their faces as I am by mine, which thus monstrously exaggerates and distorts every feeling it is called upon to express; or do I suffer alone—a man with a calm philosophic mind but with a face that long ago decided to go on the stage, and the melodramatic stage at that, a man with his heart in the right place but with his features in Hollywood?

When I first entered adult life I imagined, like the young idiot I then was, that I had complete control of my face. I was convinced that I could permit myself to feel anything behind that bland disguise. When I went out for the evening and found myself becoming more and more bored by the company, I was sure that nobody but myself was aware of

the fact. I set my face, as best I could from behind, to register a polite or even eager interest; I put on a smile and kept it there, left my eyes to sparkle away, and so forth; and then felt, even though the smile seemed rather stiff towards the end of the evening, that I could relapse with safety into comfortable boredom. As I never saw myself, it was some time before I was disillusioned. We never lose any of our illusions about ourselves in the company of strangers. But I made friends, and in this, as in other matters, they very quickly disillusioned me as they strolled, in the usual friendly fashion, through the house of my mind and casually opened a few windows here and there to let in the east wind. One would say: "Dullish at the So-and-so's the other night, I thought. You looked dreadfully bored." A succession of such remarks soon revealed to me the true state of things, and I realized that I had been deceiving myself. It was not for me to try to look one thing when I was thinking and feeling another. The idea of myself as one of your smooth fellows, made for diplomacy and the best society, for ever charming yet secretly tired of it all, would no longer hold, and, bearing in mind my newer and truer relations with my face, I was compelled to revise my estimate of myself.

There was, however, nothing alarming or even really disappointing in the situation. I was not sorry to be free from the strain of a diplomatic bearing, and congratulated myself on the fact that the higher types of human beings do not wear a smooth and impassive front. There is nothing better than an open, honest countenance, frankly expressing to the world its owner's feelings. I thought so then and I think so still, though now my opinion is worth more if only because it is more disinterested. I imagined then that mine was one of those open, honest faces, and was happy in this belief until the cumulative effect of a series of misunderstandings, of which that one last night is a good example, compelled me to take stock of myself once more, with the result that I was disillusioned once and for all. I found that people were always telling me not to be so angry when, in

actual fact, I was only slightly annoyed, were for ever asking me why I was so jubilant when in truth I was only mildly pleased, were constantly suggesting that I should not glare furiously at strangers when I was only conscious of feeling a little curious. At last I realized the truth. My face did not even honestly reflect my mind but grossly caricatured it. I was carrying into all companies a monstrous libel of myself. It was as if I were compelled to wear a set of features that did not belong to me at all but to some other and very different kind of man. Small wonder, then, that I should be so frequently misjudged, for it is not unnatural that people should imagine that these facial antics, for which I am held responsible though they seem to be entirely beyond my control, are an indication of my state of mind. How are they to know that my face has apparently an independent existence, setting to work merely on a hint from my mind and then going on in a fashion of which I strongly disapprove.

That is the irony of the situation. My face would seem to belong to a type of man I dislike. It is a theatrical, temperamental affair, for ever rushing out to extremes, whereas I am all for moderation. I do not pretend to absolute philosophic calm and detachment, but—whatever my acquaintances, the deluded audience of this face, may say to the contrary—I am certainly not a man of strong feelings, one of those people who must be excited about something, who are not happy unless they are in the depths of misery or find all existence wretched because they do not feel ecstatic, who must be always yearning and burning, loving and hating, laughing and crying. Not only have I a contempt for such persons, but I could not imitate them if I would. Such emotions as I have are small and safe and never likely to get out of hand. Ecstasy and despair do not come my way and are never likely to be encountered in the easy rambles that my mind takes every day. My attitude towards my fellow creatures is one of timid goodwill tempered here by tranquil affection and there by a faint hostility. Even

the kind of man who ought, at this moment, to be wearing my face only arouses a dislike that stops very far short of definite hatred. When, let us say (for last night still rankles), I win a game, I am only conscious of feeling a slight pleasure, spiced by just the slightest sense of triumph; and when I lose, as I do very frequently, I am certain that I am visited by nothing stronger than a tiny feeling of disappointment, a mere mental sigh. I have been guilty, in my time, of some meannesses and may have contrived, here and there to do a kindness, but never yet have I played either the villain or the hero. If life is a melodrama—and sometimes it has every appearance of being one—then I am certainly a very minor character. In short, I am a well-fed, comfortable, calm and not entirely unphilosophical adult male, with no desire for raging emotions and with precious few to rage.

That is what I am really like inside. Outside, apparently, everything is different, thanks to a set of features that totally misrepresent me. So far as I can gather, my face pounces on the least whisper in my mind, as it were, and transforms it into a shout. It grins insolently and sickeningly with triumph over a mere hand at cards. It scowls ferociously at inoffensive strangers, screams "You're a bore!" at prattling callers, and twists and writhes, lights up or fades out, falls into a sodden mass of depression, glitters with mischief, gapes or grins or glares, at every fresh turn the conversation takes. It transforms every hour into a benefit performance by a bad actor of the old school, strutting and mouthing insanely in the limelight. A talking ape with a megaphone could not produce a worse caricature of its master. While the company I am in is staring at this monstrous show, I sit there innocently behind it all, an unassuming fellow with nothing but a pleasant little rise and fall of emotion, entirely forgetting that this awful travesty of my mind is taking place until some strange misunderstanding bids me remember how grotesquely and unhappily I am situated. Am I alone in my trouble or has there been a general misdeal of faces?

Perhaps there are other unfortunates for whom the situation has been reversed, who find themselves possessed of the most towering emotions, yet cannot make their passion felt because their faces refuse to express anything beyond a slight feeling of annoyance or a tranquil pleasure. If there are any such persons, I should like to meet one of them for the purpose of comparing our baffled sensations and of finally forming and consolidating a friendship. We could at least enjoy one another's faces.

A. A. MILNE

I. LUNCH

Food is a subject of conversation more spiritually refreshing even than the weather, for the number of possible remarks about the weather is limited, whereas of food you can talk on and on and on. Moreover, no heat of controversy is induced by mention of the atmospheric conditions (seeing that we are all agreed as to what is a good day and what is a bad one), and where there can be no controversy there can be no intimacy in agreement. But tastes in food differ so sharply (as has been well said in Latin and, I believe, also in French) that a pronounced agreement in them is of all bonds of union the most intimate. Thus, if a man hates tapioca pudding he is a good fellow and my friend.

To each his favourite meal. But if I say that lunch is mine I do not mean that I should like lunch for breakfast, dinner, and tea; I do not mean that of the four meals (or five, counting supper) lunch is the one which I most enjoy—at which I do myself most complete justice. This is so far from being true that I frequently miss lunch altogether . . . the exigencies of the journalistic profession. Today, for instance, I shall probably miss it. No; what I mean is that lunch is the meal which in the abstract appeals to me most because of its catholicity.

We breakfast and dine at home, or at other people's homes, but we give ourselves up to London for lunch, and London has provided an amazing variety for us. We can have six courses and a bottle of champagne, with a view of the river, or one poached egg and a box of dominoes, with a view of the skylights; we can sit or we can stand, and without doubt we could, if we wished, recline in the Roman fashion; we can spend two hours or five minutes at it; we can have something different every day of the week, or cling permanently (as I know one man to do) to a chop and chips—and

what you do with the chips I have never discovered, for they combine so little of nourishment with so much of inconvenience that Nature can never have meant them for provender. Perhaps as counters. . . . But I am wandering from my theme.

There is this of romance about lunch, that one can imagine great adventures with stockbrokers, actor-managers, publishers, and other demigods to have had their birth at the luncheon table. If it is a question of "bulling" margarine or "bearing" boot-polish, if the name for the new play is still unsettled, if there is some idea of an American edition—whatever the emergency, the final word on the subject is always the same, "Come and have lunch with me, and we'll talk it over"; and when the waiter has taken your hat and coat, and you have looked diffidently at the menu, and in reply to your host's question "what will you drink?" have made the only possible reply, "Oh, anything that you're drinking" (thus showing him that you don't insist on a bottle to yourself)—then you settle down to business, and the history of England is enlarged by who can say how many pages.

And not only does one inaugurate business matters at lunch, but one also renews old friendships. Who has not had said to him in the Strand, "Hallo, old fellow, I haven't seen you for ages; you must come and lunch with me one day"? And who has not answered, "Rather! I should love to," and passed on with a glow at the heart which has not died out until the next day, when the incident is forgotten? An invitation to dinner is formal, to tea unnecessary, to breakfast impossible, but there is a casualness, very friendly and pleasant, about invitations to lunch which make them complete in themselves, and in no way dependent on any lunch which may or may not follow.

Without having exhausted the subject of lunch in London (and I should like to say that it is now certain that I shall not have time to partake to-day), let us consider for a moment lunch in the country. I do not mean lunch in the open air,

for it is obvious that there is no meal so heavenly as lunch thus eaten, and in a short article like this I have no time in which to dwell upon the obvious. I mean lunch at a country house. Now, the most pleasant feature of lunch at a country house is that—that you may sit next to whomsoever you please. At dinner she may be entrusted to quite the wrong man; at breakfast you are faced with the problem of being neither too early for her nor yet too late for a seat beside her; at tea people have a habit of taking your chair at the moment when a simple act of courtesy has drawn you from it in search of bread and butter; but at lunch you follow her in and there you are—fixed.

But there is a place, neither London nor the country, which brings out more than any other place all that is pleasant in lunch. It was really the recent experience of this which set me writing about lunch. Lunch in the train! It should be the "second meal"—about 1.30—because then you are really some distance from London and are hungry. The panorama flashes by outside, nearer and nearer comes the beautiful West; you cross rivers and hurry by little villages, you pass slowly and reverently through strange old towns . . . and, inside, the waiter leaves the potatoes next to you and slips away.

Well, it is his own risk. Here goes. . . . What I say is that, if a man really likes potatoes, he must be a pretty decent sort of fellow.

2. THE FRIEND OF MAN

When swords went out of fashion, walking-sticks, I suppose, came into fashion. The present custom has its advantages. Even in his busiest day the hero's sword must have returned at times to its scabbard, and what would he do then with nothing in his right hand? But our walking-sticks have no scabbards. We grasp them always, ready at any moment to summon a cab, to point out a view, or to dig an enemy in the stomach. Meanwhile we slash the air in defiance of the world.

My first stick was a malacca, silver at the collar, and polished horn as to the handle. For weeks it looked beseechingly at me from a shop window, until a lucky birthday tip sent me in after it. We went back to school together that afternoon, and if anything can lighten the cloud which hangs over the last day of holidays, it is the glory of some such stick as mine. Of course it was too beautiful to live long; yet its death became it. I had left many a parental umbrella in the train unhonoured and unsung. My malacca was mislaid in an hotel in Norway. And even now when the blinds are drawn and we pull up our chairs closer round the wood fire, what time travellers tell to awestruck stay-at-homes tales of adventure in distant lands, even now if by a lucky change Norway is mentioned, I tap the logs carelessly with the poker and drawl, "I suppose you didn't happen to stay at Vossvangen? I left a malacca cane there once. Rather a good one too." So that there is an impression among my friends that there is hardly a town in Europe but has had its legacy from me. And this I owe to my stick.

My last is of ebony, ivory-topped. Even though I should spend another fortnight abroad I could not take this stick with me. It is not a stick for the country; its heart is in Piccadilly. Perhaps it might thrive in Paris if it could stand the sea voyage. But no, I cannot see it crossing the Channel; in a cap I am no companion for it. Could I step on to the boat in a silk hat and then retire below—but I am always unwell below, and that would not suit its dignity. It stands

now in a corner of my room crying aloud to be taken to the opera. I used to dislike men who took canes to Covent Garden, but I see now how it must have been with them. An ebony stick topped with ivory has to be humoured. Already I am considering a silk-lined cape, and it is settled that my gloves are to have black stitchings.

Such is my last stick, for it was given to me this very morning. At my first sight of it I thought that it might replace the common one which I lost in an Easter train. That was silly of me. I must have a stick of less gentle birth which is not afraid to be seen with a soft hat. It must be a stick which I can drop, or on occasion kick; one with which I can slash dandelions; one for which, when ultimately I leave it in a train, conscience does not drag me to Scotland Yard. In short, a companionable stick for a day's journey; a country stick.

The ideal country stick will never be found. It must be thick enough to stand much rough usage of a sort which I will explain presently, and yet it must be thin so that it makes a pleasant whistling sound through the air. Its handle must be curved so that it can pull down the spray of blossom of which you are in need, or pull up the luncheon basket which you want even more badly, and yet it must be straight so that you can drive an old golf ball with it. It must be unadorned, so that it shall lack ostentation, and yet it must have a band, so that when you throw stones at it you can count two if you hit the silver. You begin to see how difficult it is to achieve the perfect stick.

Well, each one of us must let go those properties which his own stick can do best without. For myself I insist on this—my stick must be good for hitting and good to hit with. A stick, we are agreed, is something to have in the hand when walking. But there are times when we sit down; and if our journey shall have taken us to the beach, our stick must at once be propped in the sand while from a suitable distance we throw stones at it. However beautiful the sea, its beauty can only be appreciated properly in this fashion.

Scenery must not be taken at a gulp; we must absorb it unconsciously. With the mind gently exercised as to whether we scored a two on the band or a one just below it, and with the muscles of the arm at stretch, we are in a state ideally receptive of beauty.

And, for my other essential of a country stick, it must be possible to grasp it by the wrong end and hit a ball with it. So it must have no ferrule, and the handle must be heavy and straight. In this way was golf born; its creator roamed the fields after his picnic lunch, knocking along the cork from his bottle. At first he took seventy-nine from the gate in one field to the oak tree in the next; afterwards fifty-four. Then suddenly he saw the game. We cannot say that he was no lover of Nature. The desire to knock a ball about, to play silly games with a stick, comes upon a man most keenly when he is happy; let it be ascribed that he is happy to the streams and the hedges and the sunlight through the trees. And so let my stick have a handle heavy and straight, and let there be no ferrule on the end. Be sure that I have an old golf ball in my pocket.

In London one is not so particular. Chiefly we want a stick for leaning on when we are talking to an acquaintance suddenly met. After the initial "Hulloa!" and the discovery that we have nothing else of importance to say, the situation is distinctly eased by the remembrance of our stick. It gives us a support moral and physical, such as is supplied in a drawing-room by a cigarette. For this purpose size and shape are immaterial. Yet this much is essential—it must not be too slippery, or in our nervousness we may drop it altogether. My ebony stick with the polished ivory top—

But I have already decided that my ebony stick is out of place with the everyday hat. It stands in its corner, waiting for the opera season. I must get another stick for rough work.

3. SIGNS OF CHARACTER

Wellington is said to have chosen his officers by their noses and chins. The standard for them in noses must have been rather high, to judge by the portraits of the Duke, but no doubt he made allowances. Anyhow, by this method he got the men he wanted. Some people, however, may think that he would have done better to have let the mouth be the deciding test. The lines of one's nose are more or less arranged for one at birth. A baby born with a snub nose would feel it hard that the decision that he would be no use to Wellington should be come to so early. And even if he arrived in the world with a Roman nose, he might smash it up in childhood, and with it his chances of military fame. This, I think you will agree with me, would be unfair.

Now the mouth is much more likely to be a true index of character. A man may clench his teeth firmly or smile disdainfully or sneer, or do a hundred things which will be reflected in his mouth rather than in his nose or chin. It is through the mouth and eyes that all emotions are expressed, and it is in the mouth and eyes therefore that one would expect the marks of such emotions to be left. I did read once of a man whose nose quivered with rage, but it is not usual; I never heard of anyone whose chin did anything. It would be absurd to expect it to.

But there arises now the objection that a man may conceal his mouth, and by that his character, with a moustache. There arises, too, the objection that a person whom you thought was a fool, because he always went about with his mouth open, may only have had a bad cold in the head. In fact the difficulties of telling anyone's character by his face seem more insuperable every moment. How, then, are we to tell whether we may safely trust a man with our daughter, or our favourite golf club, or whatever we hold most dear?

Fortunately a benefactor has stepped in at the right moment with an article on the cigar-manner. Our gentleman has

made the discovery that you can tell a man's nature by the way he handles his cigar, and he gives a dozen illustrations to explain his theory. True, this leaves out of account the men who don't smoke cigars; although, of course, you might sum them all up, with a certain amount of justification, as foolish. But you do get, I am assured, a very important index to the character of smokers—which is as much as to say of the people who really count.

I am not going to reveal all the clues to you now; partly because I might be infringing the copyright of another, partly because I have forgotten them. But the idea roughly is that if a man holds his cigar between his finger and thumb, he is courageous and kind to animals (or whatever it may be), and if he holds it between his first and second fingers he is impulsive but yet considerate to old ladies, and if he holds it upside down he is (besides being an ass) jealous and self-assertive, and if he sticks a knife into the stump so as to smoke it to the very end, he is—yes, you have guessed this one—he is mean. You see what a useful thing a cigar may be.

I think now I am sorry that this theory has been given to the world. Yes; I blame myself for giving it further publicity. In the old days when we bought—or better, had presented to us—a cigar, a doubt as to whether it was a good one was all that troubled us. We bit one end and lit the other, and, the doubt having been solved, proceeded tranquilly to enjoy ourselves. But all this will be changed now. We shall be horribly self-conscious. When we take our cigars from our mouths we shall feel our neighbours' eyes rooted upon our hands, the while we try to remember which of all the possible manipulations is the one which represents virtue at its highest power. Speaking for myself, I hold my cigar in a dozen different ways during an evening (though never, of course, on the end of a knife), and I tremble to think of the diabolically composite nature which the modern Wellingtons of the table must attribute to me. In future I see that I must concentrate on one method. If

only I could remember the one which shows me at my best!

But the tobacco test is not the only one. We may be told by the way we close our hands; the tilt of a walking-stick may unmask us. It is useless to model ourselves now on the strong, silent man of the novel whose face is a shutter to hide his emotions. This is a pity; yes, I am convinced now that it is a pity. If my secret fault is cheque-forging I do not want it to be revealed to the world by the angle of my hat; still less do I wish to discover it in a friend whom I like or whom I can beat at billiards.

How dull the world would be if we knew every acquaintance inside out as soon as we had offered him our cigar-case. Suppose—I put an extreme case to you—suppose a pleasant young bachelor who admired our bowling showed himself by his shoe laces to be a secret wife-beater. What could we do? Cut so unique a friend? Ah no. Let us pray to remain in ignorance of the faults of those we like. Let us pray it as sincerely as we pray that they shall remain in ignorance of ours.

4. THE FUTURE

The recent decision that, if a fortune-teller honestly believes what she is saying, she is not defrauding her client, may be good law, but it does not sound like good sense. To a layman like myself it would seem more sensible to say that, if the client honestly believes what the fortune-teller is saying, then the client is not being defrauded.

For instance, a fortune-teller may inform you, having pocketed your two guineas, that a rich uncle in Australia is going to leave you a million pounds next year. She doesn't promise you the million pounds herself; obviously that is coming to you anyhow, fortune-teller or no fortune-teller. There is no suggestion on her part that she is arranging your future for you. All that she promises to do for her two guineas is to give you a little advance information. She tells you that you are coming into a million pounds next year, and if you believe it, I should say that it was well worth the money. You have a year's happiness (if that sort of thing makes you happy), a year in which to tell yourself in every trouble, "Never mind there's a good time coming"; a year in which to make glorious plans for the future, to build castles in the air, or (if your taste is not for castles) country cottages and Mayfair flats. And all this for two guineas; it is amazingly cheap.

And now consider what happens when the year is over. The fortune-teller has done her part; she has given you a year's happiness for two guineas. It is now your uncle's turn to step forward. He is going to give you twenty year's happiness by leaving you a million pounds. Probably he doesn't; he hasn't got a million pounds to leave; he has, in fact, just written to you to ask you to lend him a fiver. Well, surely it is the uncle who has let you down, not the fortune-teller. Curse him by all means, cut him out of your will, but don't blame the fortune-teller, who fulfilled *her* part of the contract. The only reason why you went to her was to get your happiness in advance. Well, you got it in advance; and seeing that it was the only happiness you

got, her claim on your gratitude shines out the more clearly. You might decently send her another guinea.

This is the case if you honestly believe your fortune-teller. Now let us suppose that you don't believe. It seems to me that in this case you are entitled to the return of your money.

Of course, I am not supposing that you are a complete sceptic about these things. It is plainly impossible for the fortune-teller to defraud a sceptic, otherwise than by telling him the truth. For if a sceptic went to consult the crystal, and was told that he would marry again before the month was out, when in fact he was a bachelor, then he has not been defrauded, for he is now in a position to tell all his friends that fortune-telling is absolute nonsense—on evidence for which he deliberately paid two guineas. Indeed, it is just on this ground that police prosecutions seem to me to fail. For a policeman (suitably disguised) pays his money simply for the purpose of getting evidence against the crystal-gazer. Having got his evidence, it is ridiculous of him to pretend that he has been cheated. But if he wasted two guineas of the public money, and was told nothing but the truth about himself and his family, then he could indeed complain that the money had been taken from him under false pretences.

However, to get back to your own case. You, we assume, are not a sceptic. You believe that certain inspired people can tell your future, and that the fee which they ask for doing this is a reasonable one. But on this particular occasion the spirits are not working properly, and all that emerges is that your uncle in Australia—

But with the best will in the world you cannot believe this. The spirits must have got mixed; they are slightly under-proof this morning; you *have* no uncle. The fortune-teller gives you her word of honour that she firmly believes you to have at least three uncles in Australia, one of whom will shortly leave you a mill— It is no good. You cannot believe it. And it seems to me that on the morning's transaction you have certainly been defrauded. You must

insist on "a tall dark man from India" at the next sitting.

It is "the tall dark man" which the amateur crystal-gazer really wants. He doesn't want the future. There is so little to foretell in most of our lives. Nobody is going to pay two guineas to be told that he will be off his drive next Saturday and have a stomach-ache on the following Monday. He wants something a little more romantic than that. Even if he is never going to be influenced by a tall dark man from India, it makes life a little more interesting to be told that he is going to be.

For the average man finds life very uninteresting as it is. And I think that the reason why he finds it uninteresting is that he is always waiting for something to happen to him instead of setting to work to make things happen. For one person who dreams of earning fifty thousand pounds, a hundred people dream of being left fifty thousand pounds. I imagine that if a young man went to a crystal-gazer and was told that he would work desperately hard for the next twenty years, and would by that time have earned (and saved) a fortune, he would be very disappointed. Probably he would ask for his money back.

5. PUBLIC OPINION

At the beginning of the last strike the papers announced that Public Opinion was firmly opposed to dictation by a minority. Towards the end of the strike the papers said that Public Opinion was strongly in favour of a settlement which would leave neither side with a sense of defeat. I do not complain of either of these statements, but I have been wondering, as I have often wondered before, how a leader-writer discovers what the Public Opinion is.

When one reads about Public Opinion in the press (and one reads a good deal about it one way and another), it is a little difficult to realize, particularly if the printer has used capital letters, that this much-advertised Public Opinion is simply You and Me and the Others. Now, since it is impossible for any man to get at the opinions of all of us, it is necessary that he should content himself with a sample half-dozen or so. But from where does he get his sample? Possibly from his own club, limited perhaps to men of his own political opinions; almost certainly from his own class. Public Opinion in this case is simply what *he* thinks. Even if he takes the opinion of strangers—the waiter who serves him at lunch, the tobacconist, the policeman at the corner—the opinion may be one specially prepared for his personal consumption, one inspired by tact, boredom, or even a sense of humour. If, for instance, the process were to be reversed, and my tobacconist were to ask *me* what I thought of the strike, I should grunt and go out of his shop; but he would be wrong to attribute “a dour grimness” to the nation in consequence.

Nor is the investigator likely to be more correct if he judges Public Opinion from the evidence of his eyes rather than his ears. Thus one reporter noticed on the faces of his companions in the omnibus “a look of stern determination to see this thing through”. If they were all really looking like that, it must have been an impressive sight. But it is at least possible that this distinctive look was one of stern determination to get a more comfortable seat on the 'bus which took them home again.

It must be very easy (and would certainly be extremely interesting) to go about forming Public Opinion. I should like to initiate an L.F.P.O., or League for Forming Public Opinion, and not only for forming it, but for putting it, when formed, into direct action. Such a League, even if limited to two hundred members, could by its concerted action exercise a very remarkable effect.

Suppose we decided to attack profiteering. We should choose our shop—a hosier's, let us say. Beginning on Monday morning, a member of the League would go in and ask to be shown some ties. Having spent some time in looking through the stock and selecting a couple, he would ask the price. "Oh, but that's ridiculous," he would say. "I couldn't think of paying that. If I can't get them cheaper somewhere else, I'll do without them altogether." The shopman shrugs his shoulders and puts his ties back again. Perhaps he tells himself contemptuously that he doesn't cater for *that* sort of customer. The customer goes out, and half an hour later the second member of the League arrives. This one asks for collars. He is equally indignant at the price, and is equally determined not to wear a collar at all rather than submit to such extortion. Half an hour later the third member comes in. He wants socks. . . . The fourth member wants ties again. . . . The fifth wants gloves. . . .

Now this is going on, not only all through the day, but all through the week, and for another week after that. Can you not imagine that, after a fortnight of it, the haberdasher begins to feel that "Public Opinion is strongly aroused against profiteering in the hosiery trade"? Is it not possible that the loss of two hundred customers in a fortnight would make him wonder whether a lower price might not bring him in a greater profit? I think it is possible. I do not think he could withstand a Public Opinion so well organized and so relentlessly concentrated.

But such a League would have enormous power in many ways. If you were to write to the editor of a paper complaining that So-and-So's contributions (mine, if you like)

were beneath contempt, the editor would not be seriously concerned about it. Possibly he had a letter the day before saying that So-and-So was beyond all other writers delightful. But if twenty members of the League wrote every week for ten weeks in succession, from two hundred different addresses, saying that So-and-So's articles were beneath contempt the editor would be more than human if he did not tell himself that So-and-So had fallen off a little and was obviously losing his hold on the popular imagination. In a little while he would decide that it would be wiser to make a change. . . .

Of course, the League would not attack a writer or any other public man from sheer wilfulness, but it would probably have no difficulty in bringing down over-praised mediocrity to its proper level or in giving a helping hand to unrecognized talent. But unless its president were a man of unerring judgment and remarkable restraint, its sense of power would probably be too much for it, and it would lose its head altogether. Looking round for a suitable president, I can think of nobody but myself. And I am too busy just now.

NOTES

A. G. GARDINER (1865) was editor of the *Daily News* (1902-1919). Under the pen-name *Alpha of the Plough* he wrote a number of essays. These essays were collected and published under various titles such as *Pebbles on the Shore*, *Leaves in the Wind*, *Windfalls*, and *Many Furrows*. His *Prophets, Priests and Kings* and *Pillars of Society* contain delightful brief pen-pictures of well-known personages.

I. ON CHOOSING A NAME

Fleet Street—Famous as centre of journalism in London.

The war and the menacing gloom—The First World War of 1914-18 during which London was subjected to black-outs on account of air raids.

The thousand words—The usual length of a newspaper article.

Finest English Comedy since Shakespeare—The reference is to *She Stoops to Conquer*, played at Covent Garden theatre in 1773 with immense success.

To leave Johnson to write the label—The incident is referred to in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

Quill—Quill pen with which people wrote before the days of the steel nib.

Hoc opus hic labour est—This is work, this is toil.

John Hampden—Famous leader of resistance to the imposition of ship money in the time of Charles I.

John Bright—British politician who with Cobden founded the Anti-Cornlaw League and played a prominent part in bringing about parliamentary reform.

Orion, Pleiades, Arcturus, Vega—Names of stars or constellations of stars.

I will hitch my little waggon etc.—Idiomatically "To hitch one's waggon to a star" is to place one's aim or ambition very high. Here the author merely means that he would call himself by the name of the star.

2. ON CATS AND DOGS

Mr. McKenna—A former British Chancellor of the Exchequer (1915).

I hope you are not pro-German—This essay was written during the war of 1914-18.

Pascal—French mathematician, physicist and writer on religion. (1623-62).

Literature is full of his heroism—See Scott's poem *Helvellyn* and Wordsworth's poems *Fidelity*, *Incident Characteristic of a Favourite Dog*, and *Tribute to the Memory of the Same Dog*.

Pass of St. Bernard—In Switzerland, where the monks of Hospice have bred and trained a species of large and very-intelligent dogs to search for and rescue travellers lost in the snow.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—The reference is to the famous story by R. L. Stevenson in which Dr. Jekyll, a physician, creates a separate personality for himself which absorbs all his evil instincts.

Tray—See poem *Poor Dog Tray* by Thomas Campbell.

Charles Reade—Novelist (1814-84), chiefly known for his best novel *The Cloister and the Hearth*.

3. ON UMBRELLA MORALS

Strand—A famous street in London.

Falstaff—Famous character in Shakespeare's plays, *Henry IV* and *Merry Wives of Windsor*, "a fat, witty, good-humoured old knight."

Gil Blas—A famous romance of Spanish life by Le Sage, a French novelist and dramatist of the early 18th century.

Silvio Pellico—Italian dramatist (1788-1854).

Scorch his brow—Would be incongruous.

Will Crooks—Labour politician (1852-1921).

One would as soon . . . bowler—It would be as incongruous as the idea of the Archbishop of Canterbury wearing a bowler hat. The hat would not be in keeping with his dignity.

Noble looking gentleman—Humorous reference to the liveried servants.

4. ON HABITS

Stevenson . . . in the Cevennes—The reference is to R. L. Stevenson's *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*, which is a description of a tour made by him in 1878 in the Cevennes mountains in southern France.

Modestine—Name of the ass used by Stevenson in his tour.

D'Artagnan—Character in the famous novel by Alexandre Dumas, *The Three Musketeers*.

Grant—Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885), the famous American General who commanded the armies of the North in the Civil War and became President of the United States in 1869.

Jackson—Andrew Jackson (1767-1845), American General in the War of Independence who became President of the United States in 1829.

Balfour—A. J. Balfour, a former Minister of the British Government. A brief character sketch of him is given by Gardiner in his *Prophets, Priests and Kings*.

Elder Brother of Trinity House—The Trinity House is a corporate body in England concerned with the licensing of pilots, erection and maintenance of lighthouses etc. Members of this body are called Trinity Brethren.

Mansion House—The official residence of the Lord Mayor of London.

Blackpool Sands—The beach at Blackpool in Lancashire.

5. ON DINING

Economy of the Scotsman—Often thought to be a national characteristic and embodied in many jokes.

Tube—The underground railway in London.

Lamb's spendthrift—The reference is to Lamb's essay on *The Two Races of Men* in which his friend Ralph Bigod has for his maxim that "Money kept longer than three days stinks."

Mrs. Poyser—Character in George Eliot's novel *Adam Bede*.

Peacock—Novelist, poet and writer of romances (1785-1866).

Roman practice—The practice of the ancient Romans was to vomit their food after eating their fill in order to eat more again.

Oxford Movement—A religious movement initiated in 1833 by Keble, Newman, Pusey, Froude and others.

Gourmand, Gourmet—Two French words, the former meaning one who eats to excess, a glutton; the latter meaning one who has discrimination and taste in the choice of his food and wine.

Hazlitt—Famous essayist and critic (1778-1830). The reference here is to Hazlitt's essay *On Going a Journey*.

Sancho—Sancho Panza, the squire of Don Quixote in the famous novel by Cervantes.

Mermaid—Mermaid Tavern is a famous place in English literature. It was one of the earliest English clubs in London where literary celebrities used to meet in the days of Queen Elizabeth. Keats has celebrated it in his *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern*. Here the author of the essay mentions it merely as a general name for an establishment where one can get good food.

Seville blade—Seville in Spain was formerly noted for its manufacture of fine steel blades for swords.

Hors d'oeuvres—a dish served usually at the beginning of a meal in order to induce appetite.

Table d'hote—A meal in a hotel in which the courses are arranged by the management, as differentiated from a meal *a la carte* where the courses are as ordered by the guest.

Rev. Mr. Spalding—H. N. Spalding, who founded the chair of Eastern Religion and Ethics, which was occupied formerly by Sir S. Radhakrishnan.

G. K. CHESTERTON (1874-1936) was a Journalist. He wrote fiction, poetry, drama and criticism, but it is as an essayist that he is best known. Among his volumes of essays are *Tremendous Trifles*, *All Things Considered*, *Alarms and Discussions*, and *A Shilling for My Thoughts*.

I. ON LYING IN BED

Aspinall—Name of an enamel paint.

Cyrano de Bergerac—French soldier and author of comedies (1619-55).

Il me faut des géants—I must have some giants. I must have more space to draw larger figures.

Use not vain repetitions as the gentiles do—See Matthew VI, 7. "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

Turkish Empire—Formerly the Turkish Empire contained within it many states of south-eastern Europe which have since become independent. These states were usually marked in different colours on maps.

Macedonian Massacres—Frequent massacres of the Christian inhabitants of Macedonia by the Turks who ruled the territory till the beginning of the present century. These massacres created a sensation in Europe and are here humorously referred to as Turkish Delight.

Michael Angelo—Famous Italian painter, sculptor and poet (1475-1564). The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel at Rome was painted by him. To do this he had to lie in a bed close to the ceiling.

Ibsenite pessimists—Hendrik Ibsen (1828-1906), a famous Norwegian dramatist whose plays were directed towards the social problems of his time and to the shams and conventions of society. Here the essayist accuses the followers of Ibsen and says that they would condemn the drinking of beer but would approve the committing of suicide by drinking prussic acid.

2. WHAT I FOUND IN MY POCKET

Astracan coat—Usually spelt Astrakhan, from the name of the region in southern Russia. The felt from the lambs of Astrakhan are black in colour with small tight curls, and these are used

for trimming coats, when they look like "little moustaches all over his clothes."

Virgilian Farewell—The farewell scene of Aeneas and Dido as described by Virgil in his *Aeneid*. The Carthaginian queen Dido destroys herself on a funeral pyre when she sees Aeneas sailing away. The flames seem to wave a farewell to Aeneas. Compare Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*:

By that fire which burned the Carthage queen
When the false Trojan under sail was seen.

The sea will give up its dead—Referring to the Christian belief that on the Last Day those that are buried on land and those that are swallowed up by the sea will rise up.

Apollo—Sun-god.

Christ was a Carpenter—Jesus was born in the household of a carpenter and presumably he learnt the trade.

Cross of St. George—St. George is the patron saint of England.

Municipal patriotism—Local patriotism of a town or city, from Latin *municipalis*, of or belonging to a *municipium* or free town.

Intrails—Usual spelling *entrails*, meaning what is inside a body, especially the intestines.

Dim, damp world—The reference is to coal which has been formed in ancient times, of decayed wood and other vegetable matter in proximity to which iron ore is often found.

Strange stone—Iron.

Weals of industrial war—More commonly *wales* or ridges raised on flesh by stroke of rod or whip. Here the wounds of industrial warfare are compared with those of battle.

Image and superscription of our own Caesar—See Matthew XXII, 19, 20, 21. [Jesus said] "Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's."

3. ON RUNNING AFTER ONE'S HAT

Battersea—A suburb of London. ●

Vision of Venice—Venice at the head of the Adriatic Sea is built upon a number of small islets communication between which is by means of peculiarly shaped boats called gondolas. The author thinks that Battersea in its flooded state must be looking like Venice.

“Indignant Ratepayer”—Those who write letters to editors of newspapers complaining about local matters often subscribe themselves as “Indignant Ratepayer”. Rates are municipal or other local taxes in England levied for maintaining and improving local conveniences.

Burnt at Smithfield—Smithfield was a square near London where formerly public execution took place.

Tournament of trains—In the age of knighthood and chivalry knights in armour carrying lances rode against each other to unhorse the opponent. This was called a tournament when large numbers took part.

They also serve etc.—Reminiscent of the last line in Milton’s sonnet on his blindness.

Purple hours—Delightful time. Purple was the colour of royalty and nobility, so that the phrase ‘born in the purple’ has come to mean, ‘born in a noble and prosperous family’.

Started a hat—A hunting phrase meaning, to rouse game animals from their hiding place. Example: To start a hare, a fox etc.

Theological terms etc.—Humorous way of describing curses or blasphemous swearing.

Something else that rhymes to it—Damned.

4. THE APPETITE OF EARTH

Giving stones for bread—See Matthew VII, 9. “Or what man is these of you whom if his son ask bread will he give him a stone?”

Green cheese—Note the double meaning: (1) immature cheese, not yet dried; (2) cheese coloured green with sago leaves.

A blue moon—‘Once in a blue moon’ is a common phrase, meaning something that occurs very rarely.

Dutch cheese—Hard, round cheese made in Holland and usually coloured bright red outside.

Honfleur—Port in north-west France.

Cheddar cheese—Cheese made in the place of that name in Somerset, England.

Gruyere cheese—A peculiar kind of porous cheese originally made at La Gruyere in Switzerland.

Volcanic—Because it resembles the light, spongy lava (pumice stone) thrown out by Volcanoes.

Scandinavian legend—Carlyle in his *Heroes and Hero-worship* refers to this legend. "To Thor, for his part, they handed a drinking horn—Long and fiercely, three times over, Thor drank."

Cited elsewhere—See next essay.

Royal Society—A learned body of men of science in England. To be elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (F.R.S.) is regarded as a very high academic honour.

Virescence of our satellite—Greenness of the earth.

Living water, heavenly bread—Savours of the Bible. See John IV. 10; VI. 31, 49, 58.

5. ON CHEESE

Let himself go—Notice the double meaning: (1) to write without restraint on the subject of cheese; (2) to eat cheese immoderately.

Orpheus—The story goes that when Orpheus, the ancient Greek hero and musician, played on his lyre the music was so sweet that not only the wild beasts but also the rocks and trees came to listen to the music. There is a similar story about Lord Krishna.

Cheese it—Slang for 'stop it'.

Quite the cheese—The correct thing.

The four rivers of Eden—Actually the four rivers of the Garden of Eden were: Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel and Euphrates. See Genesis II, 11-14.

The Fall—The fall of Adam and Eve as described in the Bible. Genesis Ch. III.

Grand Lama—The head of the Buddhist priestly order in Tibet who is also the head of Government.

Kine—Old plural of *cow*.

Entered Babylon and left England behind—Entered a city leaving the countryside behind, which according to the author is the real England.

Put asunder those whom Humanity has joined—Reminiscent of the words used in the Christian marriage ceremony. "Those whom God has joined together let no man put asunder." (Church of England Prayer Book: Solemnization of Matrimony.)

Daily biscuits—The words of the Lord's Prayer are: "Give us this day our daily bread."

E. V. LUCAS (1865-1938) was a writer connected with the *Punch* and the *Sunday Times*. He is famous as the author of the standard biography of Charles Lamb and as editor of his works. His volumes of essays include *Luck of the Year*, *Twixt Eagle and Dove*, *Fireside and Sunshine*, *Character and Comedy*, *Cloud and Silver*, and *Only the Other Day*. Lucas is also well known for his numerous travel books.

1. THE OTHER DOCTORS

The pen . . . stronger than the knife—His inclination to be a writer was stronger than his leanings towards being a surgeon. Compare: The pen is mightier than the sword.

Hierarchy of healing—Among the body of persons who are engaged in the art of healing.

Harley Street—Famous street in the West End of London where highly qualified specialists in medicine and surgery practise. The point of the story is that the doctor, who attends on sick people, was called upon to attend on a cat, which he felt was an indignity. So when the doctor was asked to send in his bill he replied by way of tit for tat that instead of a money payment he would be glad if the lady's husband (who was a great painter) would repaint his garden gate.

Dog-leech—Dog-doctor. Formerly the word leech was applied to a physician because in his medical practice he often made use of leeches for blood-letting.

Cock-a-hoop—Exultant, elated.

Shoemsmiths—Blacksmiths who fitted horses and other animals with iron shoes.

Farriers—Another word for shoemsmiths; sometimes used also in the sense of horse doctors.

Anstay's *Lyre and Lancet*—T. Anstey Guthrie (1856-1934) who under the pen-name of F. Anstey wrote many novels and plays. In *Lyre and Lancet*, which is described by its author as "A story in Scenes," there is a character named James Spurrell who is a veterinary doctor.

Two Ladies . . . Irish R. M. Stories—Edith Somerville and Violet Martin who wrote a series of tales of Irish life under the title: *Some Experiences of an Irish R.M.*

Vet.—Colloquial word for veterinary doctor.

Macaw—Genus of large brightly coloured parrots of tropical America.

Give a drench—Forcibly administer a dose of medicine to an animal.

Give his horse a ball—Put to death by gunshot. Note the pun on the word *ball*.

2. MY MURDER STORY

Father Brown—A Roman Catholic priest in G. K. Chesterton's detective stories who is highly successful in detecting crime.

Coles—G.D.H. and Margaret Cole, his wife, authors of numerous books on Sociology, Economics and kindred subjects.

Lethal process—Process causing death.

The Chair—The electric chair which has taken the place of the gallows in some countries.

The Force—The Police, such as the famous Scotland Yard, headquarters for the detection of crime.

Without it—Outside the Force, a private detective.

Expenditure of grey matter—Use of brain power. It is now known that thinking takes place in the grey mass of nerve cells in the outer layer or cortex of the brain.

Got out of the way—Murdered.

Where are you?—What is the point of your story?

3. THE TOWN WEEK

The Town Week is the business week, comprising all the days of the week except Sunday which is a holiday.

Living like the lilies—See St. Matthew VI, 28. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin."

Revivalists—Persons who hold meetings at which sermons are preached and prayers are said with a view to excite emotional religious fervour.

Glittering star—He recognized the earth-born star

And *that* which glittered from afar.

(The Pilgrim's Dream)

Lord's—Famous cricket ground in London, headquarters of the M.C.C. and English cricket.

Keep it holy—Compare Exodus XX, 8. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Thor's day—Thor was the Scandinavian god of thunder.

Small beer . . . Champagne—Compared to the spiritless, watery beer which is Tuesday, Thursday is far more lively and sparkling, which is champagne.

Socrates and Xantippe—Xantippe was the shrewish wife of Socrates, the famous philosopher of ancient Greece.

To the children . . . Eternity—The too serious observance of Sunday in the homes of the godly made the children hate Sunday and think of the day as too long and tedious.

Interest in barometers—This is because they propose to enjoy the day out of doors and the barometer gives them an indication of the probable state of the weather.

The Week itself—To clergymen, for instance, Sunday is the busiest day.

4. A MOTHER'S COUNSEL

London smuts—Pieces or flakes of coal dust presumably from the industrial establishments of London.

The Poms and the Pokes—The Pomeranian and the Pekinese breeds of dogs which are usually small in size and often fancied by ladies as lap-dogs.

5. ON FINDING THINGS

New Forest—In Hampshire, southern England.

Mr. Rockefeller—Famous American millionaire and philanthropist (1839-1937) who organized the Standard Oil Company and made an immense fortune.

Chiffonier—French word for rag-picker.

Island of Coll—Off the west coast of Scotland.

Bohemians—Unconventional persons, especially artists, literary men, and actors who live a free and irregular life.

HILAIRE BELLOC (1870), son of a French Father and English mother, he was educated at Balliol College, Exford. He became a naturalised Englishman in 1903 and was a member of Parliament (1906-1910). He has written essays, novels, travel books, history, biography and criticism. His books of essays bear such titles as *On Nothing*, *On Something*, *On Everything*, *First and Last*, *This and That*.

1. THE ONION EATER

Weald—Name given to the south-eastern portion of England on account of the peculiar geological features of that area in which the soil is made up of clay, sandstone, limestone and iron-stone.

Cathedral—Of Canterbury.

Roman Road—When the Romans ruled Britain (54 B.C. to A.D. 410) they made several roads. In the region of which the essayist speaks there was the Watling Street running up to Scotland.

The couple of them—Adam and Eve.

Great Day—The Last Day or Day of Judgment when according to Christian belief God will come to judge the 'quick and the dead.'

2. CONVERSATION WITH A READER

Enchanted island—Great Britain.

Buy the book off you—Buy the book from you so that you may not suffer monetary loss on account of it.

Shilling out—Put to the loss of a shilling.

3. THE COASTGUARD

St. Monica—Mother of St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo and author of *City of God* and the famous *Confessions*.

The writing fellow—Note the other disparaging names used in the essay: pedlar of prose, nib-driver, column filler, hack, inky one.

Cat's paw—Slight breeze rippling the water in places.

Tosh—rubbish.

Bent a little kedge—Wound a rope round an anchor in order to pull the boat nearer.

Sixth Aeneid—Virgil's *Aeneid* is a Latin poem describing the adventures of Aeneas, a Trojan hero, after the destruction of Troy. Here it merely means the sixth poetical effort of Mr. Jonah.

Faith in Israel—See Luke VII, 9. "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

Salt water about it—Dealing with sailors and the sea.

4 TALKING OF POVERTY

Captain of industry—A phrase from the science of Economics, meaning a leading capitalist who has invested money in an enterprise.

Riviera—The Mediterranean coast strip of south-east France and north-west Italy, famous for its delightful climate and resorted to by the idle rich for gambling and other pleasures.

Caviare—The pickled roe of the sturgeon fish eaten as a relish. Shakespeare's famous phrase 'Caviare to the General' has passed into the English idiom meaning, a good thing not appreciated by ordinary people.

Stalls—Costly seats.

Blew cheques—'Threw away' money, or spent money liberally.

Radius vector—An astronomical or geometrical term meaning a line drawn from a fixed point such as the sun or a planet to the path of a satellite.

Graduated—Marked out in portions. Note the pun on the word.

Bradbury—Currency note for 1*£* or 10*s.*, so called from the signature of a former Permanent Secretary to Government, which appeared on these notes. According to the essayist a trip to Normandy from England would cost only this small sum.

Ardennes—A forest area partly in France and partly in south-east Belgium.

The text—1 Tim. VI, 7. "For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out."

Great stripping—Parting with everything at death.

Charon's boat—According to Greek mythology the souls of the dead were conveyed over the river Styx to Hades or the Netherworld by Charon, the ferryman. Here the implication is that the poor, being less burdened than the rich, are conveyed more quickly across the river. In other words, the poor find it easier to die.

5. ON A PIECE OF ROPE

Some Midland Hell—Some factory in the Midland counties of England where her industries are concentrated and labour conditions are bad.

Strengthening of man through pulleys—Enabling man to move heavy things by the use of pulleys.

Ta-ra-ras—Usually spelt tiaras; official head-dress worn by Popes.

Knots on a log-line—Formerly the speed of a ship through the water was measured by using a piece of floating wood attached to a knotted rope (log-line) thrown out and reeled in at intervals.

Unicorn—Fabulous animal with body of horse and single straight horn.

Griffon—A fabulous creature with the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion.

Chaunty—Usually spelt Chanty, rhythmical song of sailors sung by them in time with the motions incidental to their work.

ROBERT LYND (1879-1949) was literary editor of the *News Chronicle* and writer in the *New Statesman* under the pseudonym of 'Y.Y.' He is the author of numerous essays and short stories. His volumes of essays include *The Blue Lion*, *The Money Box*, *Searchlights and Nightingale*, and *I Tremble to Think*.

1. ARGUING

Ultramodern countries—This essay was written when Fascism and Nazism flourished in Europe. Hence Italy and Germany are meant.

Brands to be plucked—"To snatch or pluck a brand from the burning" is an idiom meaning, to save somebody from risk of destruction. Here, to turn persons from their errors. See Zechariah III, 2: Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

Bann and the Barrow—Small rivers in North Ireland.

Synge's *Riders to the Sea*—A play of Irish life by J. M. Synge (1871-1909).

Pachyderm—Thick-skinned animal such as the elephant and the rhinoceros.

Throw in the towel—Yield to one's opponent.

Demosthenes—Famous Athenian orator of ancient Greece (385-322 B.C.)

Aeschines—Athenian orator and rival of Demosthenes.

Humble atheists and humble Christians—Debates of this kind used to take place in England in the latter half of the 19th century soon after the publication of Darwin's famous book, *The Origin of Species*. This book gave a different account of the origin of the animal species from that contained in the Bible. The name of T. H. Huxley will be chiefly remembered in this controversy. The word *humble* is used ironically. Neither side was humble.

Socrates—Philosopher of ancient Greece (469-399 B.C.) who used his famous method of questioning a person until his ignorance stood exposed.

St. Thomas Aquinas—Famous Italian theologian and philosopher (1225-74) who wrote a work of vast magnitude defending the standpoint of the Church.

Paddy Freeman and Al Communismo—Names invented to represent the capitalistic order of society as against the communist order.

2. ONE'S HABITS

Jeeves—One of the characters created by P. G. Wodehouse, the novelist. In many stories he appears as a resourceful and all-knowing valet.

Sherlock Holmes—Famous character created by Conan Doyle; a clever detective who is good at noticing things and drawing inferences.

Pater—Walter Pater (1839-94), critic and writer on literary and philosophical subjects. He was esteemed for his polished style.

Try-on—Doing something audacious; here pretending to search for money when one knows that one has no money in one's pockets.

Sandbag—Strike or disable a person with sandbag.

Life of Charles Lamb—The standard biography of Lamb is that by E. V. Lucas, who has also edited his works.

Montaigne—Famous French essayist (1533-92) whose writings were translated into English and have been much admired for their style and thought.

3. A LOVE THAT LASTS

Egg cosies—A cosy is a quilted covering to keep things (such as tea-pots) warm. An egg cosy keeps eggs warm for eating.

Bed-knobs—The same author has written a delightful essay under this title in the volume entitled *The Money Box*.

Coloured transfers—Coloured pictures on thin paper, familiar to children. These pictures can be wetted with water and transferred to a sheet of paper or other surface.

Ten centime piece—A French coin worth one-tenth of a franc.

Just man in Horace—The passage in Horace describing the 'Just Man' has been translated by Byron and included among his poems under the title *Hours of Idleness*. The 'Just Man' is not afraid of anything.

Black day at Ascot—Unlucky day in the Ascot races.

Iodine locket—A small metal case containing iodine, usually hung from one's neck and supposed to protect one from infection.

Infantilism—Childishness.

Filthy lucre—A disparaging expression for money used in the Bible. 1 Tim. III, 3: "Not greedy of filthy lucre."

Treasure Island—The reference is to R. L. Stevenson's famous romance of that name.

Dearer than their country—A reference to blackmarketeers and profiteers during war or other exigencies of the country.

4. THE ART OF FORGETTING

Murder of Duncan—In Shakespeare's play Duncan, king of Scotland is murdered by his general, Macbeth, under the instigation of his wife, Lady Macbeth. After usurping the throne of Scotland Macbeth and his wife are haunted by the memory of the foul deed that they had committed and ultimately come to an evil end.

Sicilian Vendetta—Vendetta is a blood-feud in which the members of the family of a murdered or injured person seeks vengeance on the offender or his family. Such a custom prevailed until recently in Sicily and Corsica.

Remember Majuba—A small detachment of British troops was defeated by the Boers of South Africa at Majuba Hill in 1881. Though the fight itself was not of much importance the memory of its consequences proved serious. While the Boers were unduly elated by their success the British felt humiliated. This finally led to a fresh war and ended in the overthrow of the Boer republics.

Remember Adowa—In the war between Italy and Abyssinia the Italian troops were disastrously defeated at Adowa in 1896. The memory of this defeat is said to have rankled in the minds of the Italians so that when they went to war again in 1935-36 against Abyssinia the slogan "Remember Adowa" was heard.

Sir Horace Plunkett—Irish statesman (1864-1932) who took great interest in the agricultural welfare of the country, founded the Irish Agricultural Society and the Agricultural Co-operative Movement.

Volcanic as the Balkans—The Balkan states of south-east Europe have been notorious for wars and violent quarrels among themselves; hence volcanic.

Civil War—The war between the North and the South on the issue of Negro slavery, 1861-65. The bitterness of the war, however, was soon forgotten.

From Herr Hitler down—This essay was written during the second World War (1939-45) when Hitler ruled Germany.

5. A DISAPPOINTED MAN

Palace worthy of Cinderella—In the well-known fairy tale of Cinderella, translated into English from the French story by Charles Perrault (1628-1703), the poor, ill-treated girl, Cinderella marries a prince and goes to live in a grand palace.

Golden Miller—Name of the horse which won the Grand National steeplechase at Cheltenham in 1934.

Wordsworthian Countenance—The implication is that Wordsworth, the poet, saw much more than others in the ordinary things of life and appreciated them. This characteristic of his has been parodied by many. For instance:

A simple daffodil to him
Was so much matter for a slim
Volume at two and four.

(A. A. Milne: *Essay on Daffodils.*)

Oscar Wilde—Famous playwright, novelist and poet (1854-1900).

Taj Mahal—One of the world-famous buildings of India built by Emperor Shah Jehan at Agra as the mausoleum of his queen Mumtaz Mahal who died about 1640.

Mosque at Cordova—Huge mosque built by the Moors who ruled the greater part of Spain until it was reconquered by the Christians in the 13th century.

Clovelly—A picturesque village in Devonshire.

Face of a Greek god—As seen in ancient sculptures and paintings the faces of Greek gods are magnificent. The Greeks had a fine conception of the beauty of the human form.

Helen—Helen of Troy, reputed to have been the most beautiful woman of ancient Greece.

Ribbon development—The building of houses on both sides of trunk roads, making the roads look like long ribbons.

Slag-heaps—Heaps of burnt-out refuse left after smelting metal ore.

Utopia—A name invented by Sir Thomas More for his book; meaning, an imaginary land of perfection.

J. B. PRIESTLEY (1894), novelist, playwright and critic, has gained equal success in each of these fields. He wrote on Meredith and Peacock in the *English Men of Letters* series. His volumes of essays include *Brief Diversions*, *Papers from Lilliput*, *Open House*, and *Apes and Angels*.

I. IN CRIMSON SILK

The gorgeous East in fee—The first line in Wordsworth's sonnet *On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic*: "Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee."

Spoil of Tyre and Sidon—Two fortified trading centres of the Phoenicians on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean noted for their riches.

Nubian slaves—Negro slaves from the Nubian Desert, south of Egypt, between the Red Sea and the Sahara.

Circassian beauties—The women of Circassia, the country to the north-west of the Caucasus mountains, are reputed for their beauty.

King Cambyses—Son of Cyrus, king of ancient Persia. He is cited here as the symbol of power, luxury and magnificence.

The Borgias—Cezare and Lucrezia Borgia, son and daughter of Pope Alexander VI, notorious for their crimes and violence. They lived in Italy in the late 15th and early 16th century.

Whipping the dogs—Treating the poorer classes insolently.

Ring up the curtain—As in the theatre when a scene is to be shown. Here the implication is that the least thing may reveal what we are.

Thomas Carlyle—The famous moralist (1795-1881) who rebuked the follies of his age.

Puck—In popular imagination a mischievous spirit. In this character he appears in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

2. A ROAD TO ONESELF

Malthus—The Rev. T. R. Malthus who published his famous *Essay on the Principle of Population* in 1798. In this *Essay* he propounded the theory that population tended to outrun the means of subsistence. The followers of Malthus advocate limitation of families.

Think better of Herod—According to the story in the Bible (See Matthew Ch. II) Herod, king of Judea, (72 B.C.—A.D. 4) ordered the slaughter of all children in Bethlehem.

Turkestan or Patagonia—Thinly populated regions. Turkestan is a Russian province in Central Asia; Patagonia is the southern area in Argentina, South America.

Last Day—According to Christian belief, on the Last Day or the Day of Judgment God will come down to the earth to judge the living and the dead. His coming on that day will be announced by the sound of trumpets. (See 1 Cor. 15:52)

One of the world's greatest romances—*Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. One of the incidents in the story is the sudden discovery of a human footprint on the sands of the uninhabited island in which Crusoe lived after the ship-wreck.

The world's story—The story of Adam and Eve. (See Genesis II, 21-22)

3. ON GOSSIP

Last fire is quenched—Life is ended.

The Troy affair—According to Homer's *Iliad* the Trojan War began with the elopement of Helen, wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta, with Paris, one of the sons of Priam, king of Troy.

Hamlet . . . Romeo—Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and his *Romeo and Juliet* are both founded, according to the author of this essay, upon gossip which grew into stories and which were taken up and made immortal by the genius of the great playwright.

Strain of the Pharisee—Element of self-righteousness. The Pharisees were an ancient Jewish sect noted for their strict formal observance of the Law. In the gospels Jesus frequently speaks of their hypocrisy.

Full cry after the quarry—A hunting phrase, meaning, in pursuit of the animal that is being hunted.

4. ON LIFE AND LUCKY BAGS

The day before yesterday—Some years ago.

Good for half a crown—May be depended upon to give half a crown, 2 s. 6 d.

Rainy days—Times of need or emergency.

Discover—Used in the sense of uncover, reveal.

Autolycus—In Greek mythology Autolycus was a son of Hermes and noted for his craft as a thief. In Shakespeare's play *The Winter's Tale* he is represented as a witty rogue and pedlar.

Legend on the cover—The words or inscription on the packet.

El Dorado—Name of an imaginary land of fabulous riches believed by the Spaniards of an earlier century to exist in the Amazon or Orinoco basin in South America. Sir Walter Raleigh attempted to discover this land in the days of Queen Elizabeth.

Worldly wise in their generation—Savours of the Bible. "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." (Acts XVI, 8).

Egg cups—Small cups in which boiled eggs are placed at table.

Don Quixote—Famous satirical romance by Cervantes (1547-1616), the Spanish writer, in which he ridicules the customs of knighthood and chivalry. Don Quixote, the hero of the story, is an idealist and pursues impossible objectives.

Parson Adams—A character in Fielding's novel *Joseph Andrews*. He is simple, good hearted, and slightly ridiculous but lovable.

Pickwick—The hero of *Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens. Pickwick is the personification of simplicity, innocence and good humour.

Lully—A Spanish Franciscan monk, mystic and philosopher of the 14th century who went out as a missionary among the Arabs. He wrote treatises on speculative subjects.

Paracelsus—A magician, alchemist and astrologer of the 16th century. Robert Browning wrote a dramatic poem about him.

Philosopher's stones—Substance formerly sought for by alchemists and believed by them to have the property of turning base metals into gold.

Elixirs of Life—Liquid substance formerly supposed to have the power of prolonging life.

Lombard Street—Famous street of bankers in London.

Open a bazaar—To preside over a function for the sale of articles and collecting funds for a charitable object such as a hospital, church, mission etc.

5. DIFFERENT INSIDE

A face that long ago decided to go on the stage—A face that always exhibited the emotions.

A man with his heart . . . Hollywood—A man who felt the proper emotions to the right degree but whose face exaggerated them as in the case of the film actors in Hollywood.

Strolled . . . through the house of my mind—Found out what was happening in my mind.

Opened a few windows . . . east wind—Made me aware of what they thought I felt.

Libel of myself—Discreditable presentation of myself.

Deluded audience of this face—The acquaintances who come into contact with him and who mistake his character.

If life is a melodrama . . . minor character—If life is a sensational drama in which the emotions are displayed violently and intensely, then I am only a very minor character in it because I do not feel those emotions to that high degree.

A. A. MILNE (1882), journalist, essayist and playwright, has attained distinction in all these spheres. His volumes of essays include *Not That it Matters*, *If I May*, *By Way of Introduction*, and many more.

I. LUNCH

In Latin—De gustibus non est disputandum: There is no disputing about tastes. In French: Des goûts et des couleurs.

Catholicity—Freedom from social conventions.

Bulling, bearing—These are terms from the stock exchange. Bulls are those speculators who attempt to push up (toss up like a bull) the prices of stocks and shares by their transactions,

while bears are those who try to bring down (hug like a bear) the prices.

History of England is enlarged—That is, by having to mention these events.

2. THE FRIEND OF MAN

Its death became it—It died a death suitable to or befitting its status.

Legacy—That is, of walking sticks.

Piccadilly—A fashionable thoroughfare in London. Here the implication is that the stick was suited to a city and not to the countryside.

Drag me to Scotland Yard—Take me to the police to report the loss.

3. SIGNS OF CHARACTER

Roman nose—Curved or hooked nose like that of an eagle's beak, said to be typical of the ancient Romans.

Index—Mark or indication.

Diabolically composite nature—Devilishly complicated or mixed character.

Wellingtons of the table—Persons who judge one's character from one's ways at table.

Cut . . . a friend—Refuse to recognize a friend; give up his acquaintance.

4. THE FUTURE

There's a good time coming—The title and first line of a poem by Charles Mackay.

Build castles in the air—An idiom meaning, to indulge in day-dreaming.

Consult the crystal—Consult a person who professes to foretell future events by gazing into a ball of glass or crystal.

5. PUBLIC OPINION

Leader-writer—One who writes leading articles or editorials in a newspaper.

Dour grimness—Stern determination.

Beneath contempt—A thing is spoken of as being beneath contempt when it is so bad that it is not even worth while expressing one's contempt of it.

Over-praised mediocrity—Something ordinary which has been praised too much.

