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STANDARD ENGLISH ESSAYS

STANDARD ENGLISH ESSAYS

EDITED AND ANNOTATED

BY

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INTRODUCTION

This volume and the volume of essays for Intermediate students already published are intended to serve the Indian undergraduate as a general introduction to the study of the Essay in English literature. It is hoped, however, that they may have a wider appeal to all who value and cherish the Essay and are interested in its literary development.

The Essay should be studied, first of all, for its own sake. It is one of the most important and most delightful types of literary composition. It is the prose equivalent of the Sonnet, admitted to be one of the most difficult exercises in verse. The men who excelled in sonnet-writing bear the greatest names in poetry: Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, and so on. Our great essayists are similarly our finest artists in prose: Bacon, Addison, Steele, Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Lamb, Hazlitt, Emerson, Stevenson, Chesterton, &c. No study of literature can be said to be complete which fails to give prominence to the Essay.

It should also be studied for more material and utilitarian reasons. The Essay appears as a constant and familiar feature of all College and University examinations; it figures with equal regularity in the public examinations for entry into the various services.

It is clear that the student ought at an early stage to know in what the good essay should consist; and these two volumes have been chosen with that end in view. A place has been found for characteristic compositions by essayists of established reputation, beginning with Bacon in the early seventeenth century and ending with writers still alive. An anthology cannot be representative without Addison, Steele, and their successors; but it has been found possible to secure a variety of more modern compositions of interest and charm.

To define the Essay is not altogether a simple matter. It has been termed "the after-dinner monologue of an interesting and well-informed man". The late Professor Saintsbury described it as "a work of prose art". He is right, of course; because with such an elastic definition he cannot be proved to be wrong. But Milton's *Areopagitica* is, after all, a work of prose art; so is Scott's *Guy Mannering*; so is Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*; and they are not essays. We shall find Mr. Freeman (in No. 25) robbing Professor Saintsbury's definition of all meaning by including in his survey of the English Essay *Urn Burial* by Sir Thomas Browne, Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Landor's *Imaginary Conversations*, and the critical writings of Pater and Matthew Arnold.

Very frequently one finds applied to it the adjectives "human", "intimate", "personal", "subjective", as if these alone defined its function and its essence. Thus Mr. Freeman tells us that your essayist must be an "intellectual spendthrift", that "your perfect egotist is your perfect essayist". It is of course obvious that the act of composition implies self-revelation; but however

liberally you may interpret these definitions you cannot possibly apply them to the delightful authors of *The Sun and the Brook*, or *By Rivers and Streams*, and such like compositions. Moreover, everybody knows that there are many essays in which the quality of subjectiveness is not at all obtrusive, and which, as a matter of fact, attract us for entirely different reasons.

It is therefore necessary to revise somewhat this prevailing conception of the Essay as being purely a personal and entirely a subjective composition—a conception obviously inspired by the work of Steele, Lamb, Stevenson, and their disciples—and to seek for a definition of more universal applicability.

One must, it seems clear, recognize two aspects: *matter* and *form*. First, in respect of *matter*. No very trustworthy guides are furnished by the subject-matter; since there is almost infinite variety in choice. As a rule politics and religion are barred; and though there is abundant humour in essays they are never designed to be solely humorous. These apart, there does not appear to be any subject on which one may not write an essay.

In addition to the subject-matter there is what may be termed the “thought-content” also belonging to the material side of the composition. Bacon attracts many readers by virtue of his shrewd worldly wisdom and his utterance of universal truths. Others find an appeal in Addison’s sincerity and goodness of heart. It has been pointed out already that the clear personal note and the chord of human sympathy give deserved popularity to the essays of many writers from Steele to “Alpha of the

Plough". But the attraction may well lie elsewhere; in Dr. Johnson's sturdy commonsense: in Lamb's whimsicality: in Hazlitt's knowledge of English literature or Augustine Birrell's enthusiasm for it. Some go to a favourite essay again and again for the love of nature and the open air which breathes in its pages: to another for the romance in life: to a third for its trenchant and compelling logic. It is not easy to achieve a definition of the Essay from a consideration of its subject-matter.

The other aspect is the *form*. We must study how the writer presents his matter; we must examine that elusive attribute called Style. It is a fundamental consideration, because the reputation of our great essayists rests not upon what they say but upon how they say it. In judging whether a lyric should be included in his famous *Golden Treasury* anthology, Palgrave stipulated that it must be worthy of the writer's genius. Similarly an Essay must be worthy of the writer's genius.

One feels that, broadly speaking, our great essayists pass this general test of Style; that in care for expression, dignity of phrase, choice of words, their compositions are worthy of them. Sometimes, indeed, they go further and adapt their style to the pattern of their subject-matter. Lamb's *Dream Children*, a bed-time story for children, is narrated with the "and then"—"and then" effect proper to such. His Captain Jackson, an officer living a life of pleasing hyperbole, has his tale told with just the requisite amount of humorous exaggeration. The starkness and bluntness of the vocabulary of *Pulvis et Umbra* surprise us until we remember that it expresses Stevenson's philosophy of Man when stripped and stark.

The two essays *The Sun and the Brook* and *By Rivers and Streams* are sheer poetry; and they are written in language which is poetical. It is clear that style counts for very much.

This being so, in searching for a definition of the Essay one may be well-advised to examine the common-sense perspicuity of Dr. Johnson's definition of it as "a loose sally of the mind". In literary matters which touched upon reason rather than æsthetics, the Doctor's opinions were usually sound; and there is a sentence in Mr. Freeman's *The English Essayist* which sets one thinking along the path of the Doctor's line of thought. Mr. Freeman says of the Essay:

It is the peculiar form in which the mind independently roams, sinks and soars, and pursues its delightful porpoise-way through territorial waters.

In other words, the mind of the essayist moves here and there in rather aimless fashion within the limits of his subject, and does not search for depth and profundity. Roughly speaking, that is what Johnson's "sally of the mind" implies. A "sally" is a military operation. There is a general plan of campaign; but premeditation and lengthy preparation are absent. There is rather an element of suddenness, something of the unexpected. The soldier on a sally depends upon the initiative of the moment, he takes what chances, he accepts whatever turns up, he follows where fortune leads. Mr. Freeman's essayist does exactly the same.

In the Essay, therefore, there is a general plan but no carefully thought out scheme. Much care is expended

upon the expression, which is rather more important than the subject-matter; and so the Essay would appear to be the literary composition in which the unstudied and unpremeditated thoughts upon a subject which come into your mind as you write are set down with careful and if possible stylish expression.

It remains for us to examine the ingredients of English style from the material in this volume.

Most of our essayists are generally happy in their CHOICE OF WORDS; they are often able to select what Coleridge calls "the inevitable word". Stevenson stands out in this particular, when he speaks of a "*municipal fitness*", "*the anchored vermin*", "*the ceremonial calumet*", and so on. More frequently the gift extends to happy phrase-making. Here Dr. Johnson is the master, e.g. "*the cringes of awkward complaisance*": "*the most officious of the whisperers of greatness*": "*the softness of habitual affability*", &c. We have Charles Lamb's "*the continual collision of his credulity*", and "*the preponderating opulence of his fancy*"; Hazlitt's "*learning sacrificing to the graces*"; Santayana's "*the weathers in his soul*", to choose but a few examples.

One cannot fail to notice the important part played by the ADJECTIVE in the sentence. It is said that Stevenson "declared war upon the adjective", but no writer is more skilful than he in its use, e.g.:

And he for all that *simple, innocent, cheerful, kindly* like a child, *constant* to toil, *brave* to drown, for others. (No. 12.)

Others too have learned that the well-chosen adjective adds definiteness, concreteness, and perhaps colour as

well to the style. Take for example this description from *By Rivers and Streams*:

Here the *fair white* water-lilies lie on their *broad green* leaves and wait for their lover the moon; for then they open their *silvery* leaves and bloom in the *soft* light *fairer* than beneath the *hot* rays of the sun.

The finest exponent of the epithet is, however, Conrad: a fact to be kept in mind when considering the final paragraph of this Introduction. Here are some characteristic sentences:

He is like a poet upon the throne—*magnificent, simple, barbarous, pensive, generous, impulsive, changeable, unfathomable*—but when you understand him, always the same.

The *thick, grey, smoky*, and *sinister* tone sets in . . . taking their breath away with *booming* gusts, *deafening, blinding, driving, rushing* them onwards in a *swaying* ship towards our coasts lost in mists and rain.

The shift of wind comes at last, the *crucial* moment of the change from the *brooding* and *veiled* violence of the south-west gale to the *sparkling, flashing, cutting, clear-eyed* anger of the King's *north-westerly* mood

The other, the East King, the king of *blood-red* sunrises, I represent to myself as a *spare* Southerner with *clear-cut* features, *black-browed* and *dark-eyed, grey-robed, upright* in sunshine, resting a *smooth-shaven* cheek in the palm of his hand, *impenetrable, secret, full of wiles, fine-drawn, keen, meditating* aggressions.

The use by the essayist of BALANCE and ANTITHESIS is too well-known to require illustration; occasional reference has been made to it in the notes. Nor need one linger to illustrate the liking for nautical phrases and Biblical

reminiscences; yet the prevalence of both in English proves clearly how the history of a people may be read in the language it speaks. The fondness (or weakness) for alliteration tells the same tale.

More strange than these is the almost universal love of FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE. No one knows better than the poet the value of a good figure—for lucidity, beauty, picturesqueness. The essayist, being closest to the poet, has learned from him; and he has embellished his prose with such ornaments as these:

Neither can justice yield her fruit with sweetness amongst the briars and brambles of catching and polling clerks and ministers. (BACON.)

While science is pursued, other accomplishments are neglected; as a small garrison must leave one part of an extensive fortress naked, when an alarm calls them to another. (DR. JOHNSON.)

Abysmal temperament, hiding wells of wrath, and glooms on which no sunshine settles; alternated with a commonsense and humanity which holds them fast to every piece of cheerful duty; making this temperament a sea to which all storms are superficial. (EMERSON.)

The early history shows it, as the musician plays the air which he proceeds to conceal in a tempest of variations. (*Ibid.*)

It fights under its trivial fluttering opinions like a smoking battleship under its flags and signals; you must consider, not what they are, but why they have been hoisted and will not be lowered. (SANTAYANA.)

To be tied to the apronstrings of truth, or coiffed with the nightcap of silence; who in this age of cheap ink and oratory; will submit to such a fate? (GALSWORTHY)

Not till the Tribunal of the League of Nations has had successes of conciliation, visible to all, will the armed individ-

alist nations of to-day begin to rub their cynical and suspicious eyes, and to sprinkle their armour with moth-powder. (*Ibid.*)

It chased the shadow across the ceiling, fought it leg by leg, dropped an inch and shook itself like an angry golliwog, returned to the fight, suddenly lowered itself to the floor with arms outspread like a ballet-dancer let down from the flies of a theatre. (ROBERT LYND.)

We have seen grow up a vast machine of industry that has made slaves of us, shut out the light of the fields from our lives, left our children to grow like weeds in the slums, rootless and waterless, poisoned the healthy instincts of nature implanted in us, and put in their place the rank growths of the streets. ("ALPHA OF THE PLOUGH.")

The above examples are natural embellishments of the style: they have come into the writer's mind as he writes, they occur to him spontaneously and are so expressed. Two of our essayists go a step further in that they appear to be deliberately metaphorical. One of them is Mr. Freeman:

Bacon was a miser of himself, sitting furred and gilded and cold, like some gorgeous Renaissance figure of a dusky painting, counting over his gains with pursed lips and sidelong eye, his fingers trembling, jewels flashing, and lips shaping a careful phrase for the enrichment of hungry Time.

Lamb is nq Lamb but a thing of nimbler nature—sometimes a mocking cuckoo, sometimes a wise, white owl, blinking his enormous golden orbs against an intrusive light, and whirring into the soft dusky privacy of the mind; sometimes a robin, friendliest of domestic voices, kindest of winter's colours; and sometimes a rich-throated blackbird flitting with his prose elegies about the graves of the poets he loved.

Like a dim-silked, dark-hued Mandarin, moving amid the

strange confusion of an Occidental procession, Max keeps a fine reserve that is itself more expressive than others' loquacity.

Resuming metaphor for the last time, it may be said that, like a huge oak, whose guttered trunk and fungus'd shoulder darkens the hill, the English novel stands boldly yet, his thin hair shaking in the cold winds; but the essay is like a thicket, changing and never dying, with dusks and deeps within, refuge of birds and shy wild beasts, home of strange and familiar voices.

It has been suggested that, as an exercise, students should attempt to reduce Mr. Freeman's elaborate figures to literalness; but it is to be doubted whether success can be hoped for; and, indeed, whether their author intended that they should yield to paraphrase. They appear rather to be deliberately ornamental, as in Conrad. His essay *Rulers of East and West* is framed in a metaphorical setting, and the figure is sustained consistently from beginning to end. One feels that a new element is being consciously introduced into English style, that the old traditions of good writing are yielding to new conceptions. This question is investigated in the final paragraph of this Introduction.

Even more popular in the essays than Metaphor is PARADOX, which should perhaps be taken to mean the love of statements which are surprising, startling, unexpected, and at first sight a little self-contradictory. The late G. K. Chesterton was of course the acknowledged master of paradox; and the theme of his essay *On Archæology*—"the past is always a living thing while the future is a dead thing"—is sufficient illustration. But he is far from being alone. Stevenson's *Pulvis et Umbra* is "a glorious paradox" on the inherent greatness of insigni-

ficant humanity. Lamb's *Captain Jackson* is a sketch of a man hospitable without means. Doctor Johnson tells us in *The Study of Life and the Study of Books*, that men of learning are the most worldly of all. Hazlitt teaches us that the man who is not in some measure a pedant cannot be very happy. A vein of paradox runs through Goldsmith's *On Justice and Generosity*.

The occasional paradox, moreover, is always cropping up, and even when it is not definitely a paradox it is yet sufficiently surprising. There is something startling in Addison's statement that "*The perverse widow was the death of several foxes*"; and in Swift's that "*Natural elocution usually springs from a bareness of invention and of words*"; in Hazlitt's "*We cannot discover the vast advantage of 'seeing ourselves as others see us'*"; in Augustine Birrell's "*The truth or falsehood of a book is immaterial*"; in Santayana's "*If we tried to say that what governs him is convention, we should have to ask ourselves how it comes about that England is the paradise of individuality*"; in Galsworthy's "*I expect the men who have come home from killing each other to show us the way back to brotherhood*"; and again "*There is no tug between democracy and aristocracy*"; and again "*If one took democracy logically, one would have to give up the idea of improvement*"; in Michael Fairless's "*A solitary not alone*"; in Robert Lynd's "*The superiority of the child to the grown man in observation*"; and also "*They were noises that produced an impression of all-pervading peace*"; and finally in "*Alpha of the Plough's*" "*We came upon a large expanse of allotments. . . . 'There,' I said, 'is the most important result of the war'*".

The use of metaphor and paradox by prose writers is clearly admissible; but the next characteristic of English style is an unconscious habit of a whole people. Take this passage from Dr. Johnson's essay:

The wretch who would *shrink and crouch* before one that should dart his eye upon him with the spirit of natural equality, becomes *capricious and tyrannical* when he sees himself approached with a downcast look, and hears the soft address of *awe and servility*. To those who are willing to purchase favour by *cringes and compliance*, is to be imputed the haughtiness that leaves nothing to be hoped by *firmness and integrity*.

It cannot be maintained that the use of these italicized pairs of words is wholly justified, since there is no easily distinguishable difference in meaning between *shrink* and *crouch*, *awe* and *servility*, or *cringes* and *compliance*. Nor can one plead that the phenomenon of pairs is a peculiarity of Johnson's sonorous style. It occurs everywhere in the selections, e.g.:

The second sort is of those that engage courts in quarrels of jurisdiction, and are not truly *Amici Curiae*, in puffing a court up beyond her bounds for their own *scraps and advantage*: the third sort is of those that may be accounted the left hand of courts; persons that are full of *nimble and sinister tricks and shifts*, whereby they pervert the *plain and direct* courses of courts, and bring justice into oblique *lines and labyrinths*; and the fourth is the *poller and exacter* of fees. (BACON.)

There must be frequent *motions and agitation*., to mix, digest and separate the juices contained in it, as well as to *clear and cleanse* that infinitude of *pipes and strainers* of which it is composed, and to give their solid parts a more *firm and lasting* tone. (ADDISON.)

I shall not remind Sir Roger of the *great and noble* monuments

of *charity and public spirit* which have been erected by merchants since the Reformation, but content myself with what he allows us, *parsimony and frugality*. (STEELE.)

I was prompted . . . to reflect that so *useful and innocent* a pleasure, so fitted for every *period and condition* of life, should be so much *neglected and abused*. (SWIFT.)

The mystery in which particular points of faith were left involved, gave an *awe and sacredness* to religious opinions; the general purport of the *truths and promises* of revelation were made known by other means; and nothing beyond this *general and implicit* conviction can be obtained, where all is *undefined and infinite*. (HAZZITT.)

The Saxon melancholy in the vulgar *rich and poor* appears as gushes of ill-humour, which every check exasperates into *sarcasm and vituperation*. There are multitudes of rude young English who have the *self-sufficiency and bluntness* of their nation, and who, with their disdain of the rest of mankind, and with this *indigestion and choler*, have made the English traveller a proverb for *uncomfortable and offensive* manners. (EMERSON.)

Our *religions and moralities* have been trimmed to flatter us, till they are all *emasculate and sentimentalized*, and only *please and weaken*. (STEVENSON.)

A large white chart lying *limp and damp* upon a *cold and clammy* table. (CONRAD.)

Then he was plunged into such a hideous hell of horrible *danger and discomfort* as this planet has never seen; came out of it *time and again*, went back into it *time and again*; and finally emerged, *shattered or unscathed*, with a spirit at once *uplifted and enlarged*, yet *bruised and ungeared* for the old time of peace. Imagine such a man set back among those who have not been *driven and grilled and crucified*. (GALSWORTHY.)

It is a mannerism which is not confined to the essayists.

It is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the style of Sir Thomas Browne, which I have analysed elsewhere:

Most remarkable of all is Browne's mannerism of pairing his words, a habit of Shakespeare's, and of all who are lovers of language. With Browne it is sheer delight to use his pairs. Sometimes they have the alliterative jingle, as *taint and tincture*, *form and figure*, *tests and trials*, *ordinary and open*. Some of them borrow from the classics to aid the more usual word: *extravagant and irregular*, *pucelage and virginity*, *revolution and vicissitude*, *reflex or shadow*, *fire and scintillation*, *spoils and trophies*. Most of them, however, merely reveal his verbal mastery: *confirm and establish*, *solitary and retired*, *content and happiness*, *sundry and divided*, &c. . . . those unstable judgments that cannot consist in the narrow *point and centre* of virtue without a *reel or stagger* to the circumference.¹

There is no lack of examples from Shakespeare:

When love begins to *sicken and decay*,
It useth an enforced ceremony.
There are no tricks in *plain and simple* faith:
But hollow men, like horses hot at hand,
Make gallant *show and promise* of their mettle.

(*Julius Cæsar*, iv. 2.)

Frequently, as Professor Sir Walter Raleigh observed, Shakespeare has one abstract and one concrete term in his pairs, thus adding to the clearness of the meaning, e.g.:

pomp and circumstance of glorious war.

The English Prayer Book has made the mannerism familiar, of course, to all Englishmen, and indicates the historical origin of the habit. In their early history the

¹ "Genesis and Growth of English", O.U.P.

British people were of necessity bilingual. For the first four centuries of the Christian era their educated men spoke the Latin language of their Roman rulers as well as the Celtic vernacular speech of their hearths and homes. During the better part of a later century there existed a Danish-English bilingualism. This was followed by the Norman Conquest, with the establishment of Norman-French in the land, and its official predominance for three hundred years.

It is not to be wondered at that the useful (and indeed necessary) practice of doubling words as an aid to meaning should become a national habit. We have traced the habit from beginning to end of our selections; but it is no less firmly embedded in our popular speech. One does not refer particularly to the often onomatopoeic doubles: *whipper-snapper*, *tittle-tattle*, *ping-pong*, *helter-skelter*, &c., to which the Englishman is so addicted. Nor is the allusion to the almost universal alliterative doubles: *cark and care*, *boil and bubble*, *born and bred*, *dark and dismal*, *facts and figures*, *first and foremost*, *hale and hearty*, *might and main*, *part and parcel*, *rhyme and reason*, *right and wrong*, *rough and ready*, *stout and strong*, *toil and turmoil*, *watch and ward*, *wild and woolly*, and so on. One thinks of the general ubiquity of the paired word: *body and soul*, *ways and means*, *time and again*, *hue and cry*, *fetch and carry*, *come and go*, *give and take*, *ups and downs*, *ins and outs*, *here and there*, *fair and square*, *rough and tumble*, *joys and sorrows*, to quote but a few examples.

This national habit would not, however, have survived and thriven had it not conformed to the people's taste. Critics are undoubtedly unanimous in asserting that the

chaste simplicity of Goldsmith's style provides the perfect model of English expression. But how few there have been to copy him! Dr. Johnson, vociferously orthodox in most matters, is so sturdy a rebel in this respect that his style has merited a special name—Johnsorese. Lamb and R. L. Stevenson are strikingly original. Compared with Goldsmith, Hazlitt is ornate. Even the moderns have succumbed to the lure of language. The climax is reached when we study the style of those writers who have been subjected somewhat to alien influences: Emerson, Santayana, and, emphatically, Joseph Conrad. They do not attempt the pure, chaste, simple style of the author of *The Vicar of Wakefield*; they prefer floridity, ornateness, and luxuriance. It is to be recalled that for Conrad especially the English language is a new medium, a new tool; and he is free to test its capabilities. There lay to his hand one of the wealthiest languages in the world. Are we permitted to conjecture that the luxuriant style of this foreign artist is merely his proof that our Goldsmith tradition is all wrong! Dare we assert that Joseph Conrad is revealing to us the full possibilities of this language of which he has made himself an acknowledged master, and that he is conforming to the true national taste?

No. 1.—Of Judicature

FRANCIS BACON

One of the greatest writers of English prose, Francis Bacon, who became Lord Verulam and Viscount St. Albans, was born in 1561, three years before Shakespeare; and he died in 1626. His father was Keeper of the Great Seal under Queen Elizabeth, while Robert Cecil, her celebrated minister, was his cousin. After leaving Trinity College, Cambridge, Bacon was called to the Bar in 1582, entering Parliament two years later. He attached himself to Essex, the Queen's favourite, and he has never been quite forgiven for his subsequent action in leading the prosecution against that unfortunate noble. Under James I Bacon became Attorney-General, and in 1618 Chancellor. Three years later he pleaded guilty to bribery, was disgraced, and spent his remaining years in literary pursuits.

His earliest work of importance was the *Essays*. The first edition in 1597 contained only ten essays; but Bacon kept adding to their number, and the final edition of 1625 had fifty-eight. His scientific works include *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) and the *Novum Organum* (1620). Other writings are the *History of Henry VII* and the *New Atlantis*, besides numerous Latin tracts.

Bacon's personality does not endear him to mankind. The *Essays*, upon which his fame chiefly rests, are brilliant but hard and utilitarian like their author. He is perhaps at his best on the sure ground of this essay on *Judicature*, which is less materialistic, and, indeed, is packed full of wisdom and of lofty thinking. In it, out of his profound knowledge of his chosen profession, he presents to us pearls of legal wisdom. The advice he has to give is beneficial, not only to lawyers,

but to all mankind. Like his great contemporary, Shakespeare, the lesson he teaches is respect for authority.

The language of the *Essays* is usually simple, brief and clear, although there are occasional archaisms. Students must be wary of words like *conceit*, *prevent*, *impertinency*, *glory*, &c., which are used by the author with a meaning rather different from the modern one. Bacon's prose style is brilliant by reason of its brevity, occasional epigrams, antithesis and balance of sentences; while it is made picturesque by the frequent employment of figurative language (in which he again resembles Shakespeare). Yet another characteristic of this author's style is its Biblical flavour. Everywhere he makes full use of his profound knowledge of the Scriptures. Equally deep is his knowledge of the classics; but this is not particularly displayed in the essay on *Judicature*.

The secret of Bacon's greatness lies in his ability to surprise us with great and universal truths. We shall find other writers with greatness of a different kind. Thus Robert Lynd surprises us with the little everyday truths of mankind that we often forget all about; while G. K. Chesterton surprises us, as everybody knows, with unexpected truths of humanity, and presents things from a viewpoint altogether unusual.

Judges ought to remember that their office is *jus dicere* and not *jus dare*; ¹ to *interpret law*, and not to *make law* or *give law*; else will it be like the authority claimed by the Church of Rome, which, under pretext of exposition of Scripture, doth not stick ² to add and alter, and to pronounce that which they do not find, and by show of antiquity to introduce novelty. Judges ought to be more learned than witty, more reverend than plausible, and more advised ³ than confident. Above all things, integrity is their portion and proper virtue. *Cursed* (saith the law) *is he that removeth the landmark.*⁴ The mislayer of a mere

stone ⁵ is to blame; but it is the unjust judge that is the capital remover of landmarks, when he defineth amiss of lands and property. One foul sentence ⁶ doth more hurt than many foul examples; for these do but corrupt the stream, the other corrupteth the fountain: ⁷ so saith Solomon, ⁸ *Fons turbatus et vena corrupta est justus cadens in causa sua coram adversario*. The office of judges may have reference unto the parties that sue, unto the advocates that plead, unto the clerks and ministers of justice ⁹ underneath them, and to the sovereign or state above them.

First, for the causes or parties that sue. *There be* (saith the Scripture) *that turn judgment into wormwood*; ¹⁰ and surely there be also that turn it into vinegar; ¹¹ for injustice maketh it bitter, and delays make it sour.¹² The principal duty of a judge is to suppress force and fraud; whereof force is the more pernicious when it is open, and fraud when it is close ¹³ and disguised. Add thereto contentious suits, which ought to be spewed out as the surfeit of courts. A judge ought to prepare his way to a just sentence as God useth to prepare his way, by raising valleys ¹⁴ and taking down hills: so when there appeareth on either side a high hand,¹⁵ violent prosecution, cunning advantages taken, combination,¹⁶ power, great counsel, then is the virtue of a judge seen to make inequality equal; that he may plant his judgment as upon an even ground. *Qui fortiter emungit elicit sanguinem*; ¹⁷ and where the wine-press is hard wrought, it yields a harsh wine that tastes of the grape-stone. Judges must beware of hard constructions and strained inferences; for there is no worse torture than the torture of laws: especially in case of laws nenal they ought to have care that that which was meant

for terror be not turned into rigour; and that they bring not upon the people that shower whereof the Scripture speaketh, *Pluet super eos laqueos*; ¹⁸ for penal laws pressed are a shower of snares upon the people: therefore let penal laws, if they have been sleepers ¹⁹ of long or if they be grown unfit for the present time, be by wise judges confined in the execution: *Judicis officium est, ut res, ita tempora rerum, &c.* ²⁰ In causes of life and death, judges ought (as far as the law permitteth) in justice to remember mercy, and to cast a severe eye upon the example but a merciful eye upon the person. ²¹

Secondly, for the advocates and counsel that plead. Patience and gravity of hearing is an essential part of justice; and an over-speaking judge is no *well-tuned cymbal*. It is no grace ²² to a judge first to find that which he might have heard in due time from the bar, or to show quickness of conceit ²³ in cutting off evidence ²⁴ or counsel too short, or to prevent ²⁵ information by questions though pertinent. The parts of a judge in hearing are four: to direct the evidence; to moderate length, repetition, or impertinency ²⁶ of speech; to recapitulate, select, and collate the material points of that which hath been said; and to give the rule of sentence. Whatsoever is above these ²⁷ is too much, and proceedeth either of glory ²⁸ and willingness ²⁹ to speak, or of impatience to hear, or of shortness of memory, or of want of a staid and equal attention. It is a strange thing to see that the boldness of advocates should prevail with judges; whereas they should imitate God, in whose seat they sit, who represseth the presumptuous and giveth grace ³⁰ to the modest; but it is more strange that judges should have noted favourites,

which cannot but cause multiplication of fees and suspicion of by-ways. There is due from the judge to the advocate some commendation and gracing,³¹ where causes are well handled and fair pleaded, especially towards the side which obtaineth not;³² for that upholds in the client the reputation of his counsel, and beats down in him the conceit of his cause.³³ There is likewise due to the public a civil reprehension³⁴ of advocates, where there appeareth cunning counsel, gross neglect, slight information, indiscreet pressing,³⁵ or an over-bold defence; and let not the counsel at the bar chop with³⁶ the judge, nor wind himself into the handling of the cause anew after the judge hath declared his sentence; but, on the other side, let not the judge meet the cause half-way, nor give occasion to the party to say, his counsel or proofs were not heard.

Thirdly, for that that concerns clerks and ministers. The place of justice is a hallowed place; and therefore not only the bench but the foot-pace³⁷ and precincts and purprise³⁸ thereof ought to be preserved without scandal and corruption; for certainly *Grapes*³⁹ (as the Scripture saith) *will not be gathered of thorns or thistles*; neither can justice yield her fruit⁴⁰ with sweetness amongst the briars and brambles of catching and polling clerks⁴¹ and ministers. The attendance of courts is subject to four bad instruments: first, certain persons that are sowers of suits; which make the court swell and the country pine:⁴² the second sort is of those that engage courts in quarrels of jurisdiction, and are not truly *amici curiae*,⁴³ in puffing a court up beyond her bounds for their own scraps⁴⁴ and advantage: the third sort is of those that may be accounted the left hands⁴⁵ of courts; persons that are

full of nimble and sinister tricks and shifts, whereby they pervert the plain and direct courses of courts, and bring justice into oblique lines and labyrinths: and the fourth is the poller and exacter of fees: which justifies the common resemblance of the courts of justice to the bush, whereunto while the sheep flies for defence in weather ⁴⁶ he is sure to lose part of his fleece. On the other side, an ancient clerk, skilful in precedents, wary in proceeding, and understanding in the business of the court, is an excellent finger ⁴⁷ of a court, and doth many times point the way to the judge himself.

Fourthly, for that which may concern the sovereign and estate. Judges ought above all to remember the conclusion of the Roman Twelve Tables, *Salus populi suprema lex*; ⁴⁸ and to know that laws, except they be in order to that end, are but things captious and oracles not well inspired: therefore it is a happy thing in a state when kings and states do often consult with judges; and again, when judges do often consult with the king and state: the one when there is matter of law intervenient ⁴⁹ in business of state; the other when there is some consideration of state intervenient in matter of law; for many times the thing deduced to judgment may be *meum* and *tuum*, ⁵⁰ when the reason and consequence thereof may trench ⁵¹ to point of estate: I call matter of estate not only the parts of sovereignty, but whatsoever introduceth any great alteration or dangerous precedent, or concerneth manifestly any great portion of people: and let no man weakly conceive that just laws and true policy have any antipathy; for they are like the spirits and sinews, that one moves with the other. Let judges also remember

that Solomon's throne was supported by lions on both sides: let them be lions, but yet lions under the throne; ⁵² being circumspect that they do not check or oppose any points of sovereignty. Let not judges also be so ignorant of their own right as to think there is not left to them, as a principal part of their office, a wise use and application of laws; for they may remember what the apostle saith of a greater law than theirs; *Nos scimus quia lex bona est, modo quis ea utatur legitime.*⁵³

NOTES

1. *jus dicere*, from Latin, *jus*, law, and *dicere*, to speak. So *dare*, to give.
2. *doth not stick*, rather archaic, 'does not refrain from'.
3. *advised*, deliberate.
4. *cursed*, &c., from Deuteronomy, xxvii. 17: Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark.
5. *a mere stone*, a boundary stone.
6. *foul sentence*, a judgment deliberately false.
7. *stream . . . fountain*, a characteristic example of the author's use of figurative language and also of antithesis; *fountain*, the spring at the source.
8. *so saith Solomon*, quoting from Proverbs, xxv. 26: A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring.
9. *ministers of justice*, subordinate law officers. The modern meaning is rather different.
10. *wormwood*, from Amos, v. 7: Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth.
11. *vinegar*. Again the preference for the figurative expression.
12. *delays make it sour*. Shakespeare also complains of the law's delays; and Bacon writes elsewhere, "Fresh justice is the sweetest"

13. *close, secret.*

14. *raising valleys*, a reminiscence of Isaiah, xl. 4: Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.

15. *a high hand*, blustering or dictatorial methods.

16. *combination*, with the idea of something underhand.

17. *Qui fortiter*, from Proverbs, xxx. 33: Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

18. *Pluet*, from Psalms, xi. 6: Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.

19. *sleepers*. Once again figurative language.

20. *Judicis*, from Ovid, the Roman poet; defining the duty of the judge. The next sentence gives the translation.

21. *severe . . . merciful*. Once more the antithetical balance.

22. *grace*, a word used frequently by Bacon. Here it has the sense of 'favour', 'kindness'.

23. *conceit*, thought; the older meaning of the word.

24. *cutting off evidence*. Bacon is supposed to be attacking the celebrated Coke, who was notoriously impatient and over-talkative.

25. *prevent*, anticipate. Another old-fashioned meaning.

26. *impertinency*, irrelevancy.

27. *above these*, additional to these.

28. *glory*, self-glorification.

29. *willingness*, over-desire.

30. *grace*, favour.

31. *gracing*, compliments. Another old-fashioned word.

32. *obtaineth not*, does not gain the verdict, i.e. the losing side.

33. *upholds . . . beats down*. Again the balance of phrase.

34. *civil reprehension*, politely-worded censure.

35. *pressing*, straining inferences.

36. *chop with*, argue with.

37. *foot-pace*. The exact meaning is not known; it has

been taken to mean 'lobbies' or 'landing-places on a staircase'.

38. *precincts and purprise*, the whole area or enclosure of the court.

39. *Grapes*, from Matthew, vii. 15: Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.² Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

40. *yield her fruit*, elaborating the Biblical figure of speech.

41. *catching and polling clerks*, defined afterwards as 'the poller and exacter of fees'; having something of the significance of our 'tout'.

42. *pine*, suffer. This word has dropped out of general use.

43. *amici curiae*, friends of the court.

44. *scraps*, gains, benefits.

45. *left hands*, with the meaning of 'sinister'.

46. *in weather*, in bad weather.

47. *an excellent finger*. Again the illustrative figure of speech.

48. *Salus populi*, the safety of the people is the highest law.

49. *intervenient*, intervening.

50. *meum and tuum*, mine and thine.

51. *may trench*, may go near to touching upon some matter of state.

52. *lions under the throne*. Again the illustrative metaphor.

53. *Nos scimus*, from 1 Timothy, i. 8: But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully.

EXERCISES

1. Illustrate from this essay Bacon's acquaintance with the Bible.

2. Quote some examples of archaic language in the essay.

3. Write a note on Bacon's use of figurative language.

4. What evidence do you find of his (a) nobility of thought, and (b) materialism?

5. Illustrate the author's effective use of antithesis.

6. Conrad writes of 'the picturesque character' of a phrase. Examine some of Bacon's metaphors from this point of view.

7. "Respect for authority is the keynote of this essay." Discuss.

8. What does Bacon conceive to be the 'office of a judge'?

9. "Let no man weakly conceive that just laws and true policy have any antipathy." Apply this dictum to modern political movements in Europe and India.

10. Summarize Mr. Freeman's remarks about Bacon (No. 25, Part I). How far are you in agreement with him?

No. 2.—Labour and Exercise (*Spectator* No. 115)

JOSEPH ADDISON

Joseph Addison was born in 1672, the same year as Richard Steele; was educated at the same school, Charterhouse; and went from there to the same University, Oxford. He became a Fellow of Magdalen College. In 1699 he obtained a travelling scholarship and toured Europe. The year 1703 saw the publication of *The Campaign*, a poem in praise of the Duke of Marlborough's victory at Blenheim, which secured for the poet an under-Secretaryship of State. His tragedy *Cato* appeared in 1713; but his high literary reputation rests upon his association with his friend Steele in the *Tatler* and *Spectator*. He died in 1719.

The essay which follows is No. 115 of the *Spectator*, and is typical of its author. While Steele supplied the sentiment, the pathos, and the other characteristics associated with his exuberant spirit, Addison contributed the ballast, so to speak. His are the literary criticisms, e.g. on Milton, in which he dictated English opinion upon that neglected genius; and on *Chevy Chase*, a favourite ballad of the people, which gave him particular delight. Steele was full of projects and fertile in invention; Addison was the greater artist, with a balanced and shapely style, deeper in thought and judgment. He was in very truth the *Spectator* of the essays; and he succeeded admirably in his chief object: to bring "philosophy out of libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies; at tea-tables and in coffee-houses": to produce "such writings as tend to the wearing out of ignorance, passion and prejudice"

Addison's style, while lacking the brilliance of Bacon's epigrams, reveals the same balance and antithesis. There is at least equal care, and perhaps more restraint, together with a full share of elevation and dignity. Differing from Bacon, he extracts some humour from life, and reflects it in his essays. Here, for instance, we have conscious humour in the picture of Addison, with his dumb-bell, his solitary exercises, and his wondering landlady; also in his 'boxing without the blows'. There is also unconscious humour in the fact that there is nothing new under the sun, and that the modern fetish of physical fitness is not modern at all.

Ut sit mens sana in corpore sano.¹—*Juvenal*.

Bodily labour is of two kinds, either that which a man submits to for his livelihood, or that which he undergoes for his pleasure. The latter of them generally changes the name of labour for that of exercise, but differs only from ordinary labour as it rises ² from another motive.

A country life abounds in both these kinds of labour, and for that reason gives a man a greater stock of health, and consequently a more perfect enjoyment of himself, than any other way of life. I consider the body as a system of tubes and glands,³ or to use a more rustic phrase,⁴ a bundle of pipes ⁵ and strainers,⁶ fitted to one another after so wonderful a manner as to make a proper engine for the soul to work with. This description does not only comprehend the bowels, bones, tendons,⁷ veins, nerves and arteries, but every muscle and every ligature, which is a composition of fibres, that are so many imperceptible tubes of pipes interwoven on all sides with invisible glands or strainers.

This general idea of a human body, without considering

it in its niceties ⁸ of anatomy, lets us see how absolutely necessary labour is for the right preservation of it. There must be frequent motions and agitations, ⁹ to mix, digest, and separate the juices ¹⁰ contained in it, as well as to clear and cleanse that infinitude of pipes and strainers of which it is composed, and to give their solid parts a more firm and lasting tone.¹¹ Labour or exercise ferments the humours,¹² casts them into their proper channels, throws off redundancies,¹³ and helps nature in these secret distributions, without which the body cannot subsist in its vigour, nor the soul act with cheerfulness.

I might here mention the effects which this has upon all the faculties of the mind, by keeping the understanding clear, the imagination untroubled, and refining those spirits that are necessary for the proper exertion of our intellectual faculties, during the present laws of union between soul and body. It is to a neglect in this particular that we must ascribe the spleen,¹⁴ which is so frequent in men of studious and sedentary tempers,¹⁵ as well as the vapours ¹⁶ to which those of the other sex are so often subject.

Had not exercise been absolutely necessary for our well-being, nature would not have made the body so proper for it, by giving such an activity to the limbs, and such a pliancy to every part as necessarily produce those compressions, extensions, contortions, dilatations, and all other kinds of motions that are necessary for the preservation of such a system of tubes and glands as has been before mentioned. And that we might not want inducements to engage us in such an exercise of the body as is proper for its welfare, it is so ordered that nothing

valuable¹⁷ can be procured without it. Not to mention riches and honour, even food and raiment are not to be come at without the toil of the hands and sweat of the brows. Providence furnishes materials, but expects that we should work them up¹⁸ ourselves. The earth must be laboured¹⁹ before it gives its increase,²⁰ and when it is forced into its several products, how many hands must they pass through before they are fit for use? Manufactures, trade, and agriculture, naturally employ nineteen parts of the species²¹ in twenty; and as for those who are not obliged to labour, by the condition²² in which they are born, they are more miserable than the rest of mankind, unless they indulge themselves in that voluntary labour which goes by the name of exercise.

My friend Sir Roger has been an indefatigable man of business of this kind,²³ and has hung several parts of his house with the trophies of his former labours. The walls of his great hall are covered with the horns of several kinds of deer that he has killed in the chase, which he thinks the most valuable furniture of his house, as they afford him frequent topics of discourse, and show that he has not been idle.²⁴ At the lower end of the hall is a large otter's skin²⁵ stuffed with hay, which his mother ordered to be hung up in that manner, and the Knight looks upon with great satisfaction, because it seems he was but nine years old when his dog killed him. A little room adjoining to the hall is a kind of arsenal filled with guns of several sizes and inventions, with which the Knight has made great havoc in the woods, and destroyed many thousands of pheasants, partridges, and woodcocks. His stable doors are patched with noses²⁶ that belonged to foxes of the

Knight's own hunting down. Sir Roger showed me one of them that for distinction's sake has a brass nail struck through it, which cost him about fifteen hours' riding,²⁷ carried him through half a dozen counties, killed him a brace²⁸ of geldings, and lost above half his dogs. This the Knight looks upon as one of the greatest exploits of his life. The perverse widow,²⁹ whom I have given some account of, was the death of several foxes;³⁰ for Sir Roger has told me that in the course of his amours³¹ he patched the western door of his stable. Whenever the widow was cruel, the foxes were sure to pay for it. In proportion as his passion for the widow abated, and old age came on, he left off fox-hunting; but a hare is not yet safe that sits³² within ten miles of his house.

There is no kind of exercise which I would so recommend to my readers of both sexes as this of riding, as there is none which so conduces to health, and is every way accommodated³³ to the body, according to the idea which I have given of it. Doctor Sydenham³⁴ is very lavish in its praises; and if the English reader would see the mechanical effects of it described at length, he may find them in a book published not many years ago, under the title of *Medicina Gymnastica*.³⁵ For my own part, when I am in town, for want of these opportunities, I exercise myself³⁶ every morning upon a dumb bell which is placed in a corner of my room, and pleases me the more because it does everything I require of it in the most profound silence.³⁷ My landlady and her daughters are so well acquainted with my hours of exercise, that they never come into my room to disturb me whilst I am ringing.³⁸

When I was some years younger than I am at present,

I used to employ myself in a more laborious diversion, which I learned from a Latin treatise³⁹ of exercises that is written with great erudition; it is there called the *skio-machia*, or the fighting with a man's own shadow;⁴⁰ and consists in the brandishing of two short sticks grasped in each hand, and loaded with plugs of lead at either end. This opens the chest, exercises the limbs, and gives a man all the pleasure of boxing, without the blows. I could wish that several learned men would lay out⁴¹ that time which they employ in controversies and disputes about nothing, in this method of fighting with their own shadows. It might conduce very much to evaporate the spleen, which makes them uneasy⁴² to the public as well as to themselves.

To conclude, as I am a compound of soul and body, I consider myself as obliged to a double scheme of duties; and think I have not fulfilled the business of the day, when I do not thus employ the one in labour and exercise, as well as the other in study and contemplation.

NOTES

1. *Ut sit*, 'Pray for a healthy mind in a healthy body'
2. *rises*, arises, is prompted by.
3. *glands*, organs formed of cells secreting constituents of blood for use or rejection.
4. *rustic phrase*, less technical term.
5. *pipes*, as used for water supply or drainage in ordinary life.
6. *strainers*, used to clear water, soil, &c., of impurities.
7. *tendons*, strong cords attaching muscles to bones.
8. *niceties*, i.e. without going into technical details.
9. *agitations*, sudden movements.
10. *jui'es*, extracted from food to build up the body.

11. *tone*, firmness, tension.
12. *ferments the humours*, stirs up the fluids in the bodily system.
13. *throws off redundancies*, evaporates whatever is superfluous to health.
14. *the spleen*, the melancholy mood caused by disorders in the organ of the body called the spleen.
15. *sedentary tempers*, moods caused by a sedentary life.
16. *the vapours*, the nervous, capricious, irritable, and frequently depressed moods to which some women are subject. It is a rather old-fashioned expression, like *humours*.
17. *valuable*, worth attaining.
18. *work them up*, shape them to the best advantage.
19. *laboured*, tilled, ploughed.
20. *gives its increase*. One of the many instances of the use of Biblical phraseology.
21. *of the species*, of the human race.
22. *condition*, social rank.
23. *business of this kind*, hunting, especially fox-hunting, and other sports of the English country gentleman.
24. *not been idle*. The whole description is a good example of Addison's gentle irony, which often takes the form of a pleasing hyperbole.
25. *otter's skin*. Students will find descriptions of rural sports in such books as Scott's *Guy Mannering*.
26. *patched with noses*, it was the custom to nail the heads of foxes to the stable and barn doors.
27. *fifteen hours' riding*, they had hunted the fox on several mornings before they had killed it.
28. *killed him a brace*, he had ridden two of his horses to death in hunting this fox, and many of his dogs had perished.
29. *perverse widow*, first mentioned in Paper No. 2: "It is said he keeps himself a bachelor by reason he was crossed in love by a perverse beautiful widow of the next county to him. Before this disappointment, Sir Roger was what you call a fine gentleman . . ." Paper No. 113 describes Sir Roger's wooing of the widow.

30. *death of several foxes*, his ill-luck with the perverse widow drove him the more eagerly to find relief in fox-hunting. Note the element of surprise, of the unexpected, in this sentence.

31. *amours*, his efforts to gain her love. The modern meaning of this French word is rather different.

32. *sits*, the term used to describe the hare couched in her 'form'.

33. *accommodated*, suited.

34. *Dr. Sydenham*, a very celebrated physician of the period. He was a fellow of All Souls, Oxford, and died in 1689.

35. *Medicina Gymnastica*, the medicine of healthy exercise; a treatise concerning the power of exercise, with respect to the animal economy, by Francis Fuller, 1705.

36. *exercise myself*, thus anticipating by two hundred years what is generally regarded as a modern practice.

37. *silence*. Cf. the Spectator's account of himself in Paper No. 1: "I had not been long at the University, before I distinguished myself by a most profound silence: for, during the space of eight years, excepting in the public exercises of the college, I scarce uttered the quantity of an hundred words; and indeed I do not remember that I ever spoke three sentences together in my whole life."

38. *whilst I am ringing*, while I am doing my dumb-bell exercises. Addison's *dumb-bell* was not the same as our *dumb-bells*. It was an apparatus like that for swinging a church-bell, but without the bell.

39. *Latin treatise*, by Hieronymus Mercurialis (1569), apparently a very popular book, which included a description of the Roman games.

40. *shadow fighting*. Modern training methods for boxers include shadow boxing.

41. *lay out*, spend with profit.

42. *uneasy*, troublesome.

EXERCISES

1. Quote some examples of words used by Addison in a sense different from the modern.
2. Addison differs from Bacon in having the saving grace of humour. Illustrate, and refer to any other differences you have noted.
3. Give some instances of Addison's dignity of thought.
4. Write an essay on "There is nothing new under the sun."
5. Examine Addison's style, and quote examples of his use of antithesis, paradox, irony, and hyperbole.

No. 3.—Trade and Conduct (*Spectator* No. 174)

RICHARD STEELE

The following are the chief events in the life of Sir Richard Steele. He was born in Dublin in 1672, the same year as Addison. Both were educated at Charterhouse, and both went from there to Oxford, Steele's college being Merton. He left without a degree, and joined the army in 1694. His earliest work was *The Christian Hero*, a work of military devotion. In 1707 he became editor of the official *Gazette*. The *Tatler* was founded in 1709, appearing thrice weekly, and containing news, gossip, correspondence, and charming essays. Of these Addison contributed 42, and he collaborated with Steele in most of the others. The *Tatler* appeared for the last time in January, 1711, and was succeeded in March of the same year by the more celebrated *Spectator*. The *Guardian* came later. Of Steele's other writings the chief are comedies, such as *The Tender Husband* and *The Conscious Lovers*. He died in 1729. The style of Steele is more natural and spontaneous than Addison's. There appears to be less conscious literary effort; but there is also less purity, less limpid clearness. Not brilliant but easy, Steele's style reflects his character. For Bacon's materialism, for Addison's thoughtfulness, he substitutes sentiment, pathos, and human sympathy. He shares with the latter, but more abundantly, the saving grace of humour. His style has perhaps more of the idiom of the age of Queen Anne: and it is in almost complete contrast to Bacon's. More modern by a century, it is correspondingly freer from archaisms and obsolete turns of expression. No dependence

is placed upon the aphoristic style which makes Bacon's essays a collection of maxims; antithesis and climax are not so frequently employed.

Steele's fame rests upon the *Tatler* and *Spectator* essays, and most of all upon the charming character creations known as the *Spectator Club*, and often grouped together as the *Coverley Papers*.

There is scarce anything more common than animosities between parties that cannot subsist¹ but by their agreement. This was well represented in the sedition of the members of the human body in the old Roman fable.² It is often the case of lesser confederate states against a superior power, which are hardly held together though their unanimity is necessary for their common safety. And this is always the case of the landed and trading interest of Great Britain; the trader is fed by the product of the land, and the landed man³ cannot be clothed but by the skill of the trader; and yet those interests are ever jarring.

We had last winter an instance of this at our Club, in Sir Roger de Coverley and Sir Andrew Freeport, between whom there is generally a constant, though friendly, opposition of opinions. It happened that one of the company, in an historical discourse, was observing, that Carthaginian faith⁴ was a proverbial phrase to intimate breach of leagues.⁵ Sir Roger said it could hardly be otherwise; that the Carthaginians were the greatest traders in the world; and as gain is the chief end of such a people, they never pursue any other. The means to it are never regarded; they will, if it comes easily, get money honestly; but if not, they will not scruple to attain it by

fraud or cozenage.⁶ And indeed, what is the whole business of the trader's account, but to overreach him who trusts to his memory? But were that not so, what can there great and noble be expected from him whose attention is for ever fixed upon balancing his books, and watching over his expenses? And at best, let frugality⁷ and parsimony be the virtues of the merchant,⁸ how much is his punctual dealing⁹ below a gentleman's charity to the poor, or hospitality among his neighbours?

Captain Sentry observed Sir Andrew very diligent in hearing¹⁰ Sir Roger, and had a mind to¹¹ turn the discourse,¹² by taking notice¹³ in general from the highest to the lowest parts of humane society, there was a secret, though unjust way among men, of indulging the seeds of ill-nature and envy, by comparing their own state of life to that of another, and grudging the approach of their neighbour to their own happiness; and on the other side, he who is the less at his ease repines at¹⁴ the other, who, he thinks, has unjustly the advantage over him. Thus the civil and military list look upon each other with much ill-nature; the soldier repines at the courtier's power, and the courtier rallies¹⁵ the soldier's honour; or, to come to lower instances, the private men in the horse and foot¹⁶ of an army, the carmen and coachmen in the city streets, mutually look upon each other with ill-will, when they are in competition for quarters¹⁷ or the way¹⁸ in their respective motions.

It is very well, good Captain, interrupted Sir Andrew. You may attempt to turn the discourse, if you think fit, but I must, however, have a word or two with Sir Roger; who, I see, thinks he has paid me off,¹⁹ and been very

severe upon the merchant. I shall not, continued he, at this time remind Sir Roger of the great and noble monuments of charity and public spirit ²⁰ which have been erected by merchants since the Reformation, but at present content myself with what he allows us, parsimony and frugality. If it were consistent ²¹ with the quality of so ancient a baronet as Sir Roger, to keep an account or measure things by the most infallible way, that of numbers, he would prefer our parsimony to his hospitality. If to drink so many hogsheads is to be hospitable, we do not contend for the fame of that virtue; but it would be worth while to consider, whether so many artificers ²² at work ten days together by my appointment, or so many peasants made merry on Sir Roger's charge, ²³ are the men more obliged. I believe the families of the artificers will thank me, more than the households of the peasants will Sir Roger. Sir Roger gives to his men, but I place mine above the necessity or obligation of my bounty. I am in very little pain ²⁴ for the Roman proverb upon the Carthaginian traders; the Romans were their professed enemies; I am only sorry no Carthaginian histories have come to our hands; we might have been taught perhaps by them some proverbs against the Roman generosity, in fighting for and bestowing other people's goods. But since Sir Roger has taken occasion from an old proverb to be out of humour with merchants, it should be no offence to offer one not quite so old in their defence. When a man happens to break ²⁵ in Holland, they say of him that *he has not kept true accounts*. This phrase, perhaps, among us would appear a soft or humorous way of speaking, but with that exact nation ²⁶ it bears

the highest reproach. For a man to be mistaken in the calculation of his expense, in his ability to answer future demands, or to be impertinently sanguine²⁷ in putting his credit to too great adventure, are all instances of as much infamy, as with gayer nations to be failing in courage or common honesty.

Numbers are so much the measure of everything that is valuable, that it is not possible to demonstrate the success of any action, or the prudence of any undertaking, without them. I say this in answer to what Sir Roger is pleased to say, that little that is truly noble can be expected from one who is ever poring on his cash-book or balancing his accounts. When I have my returns from abroad, I can tell to a shilling by the help of numbers the profit or loss by my adventure; but I ought also to be able to show that I had reason for making it, either from my own experience or that of other people, or from a reasonable presumption that my returns will be sufficient to answer my expense and hazard;²⁸ and this is never to be done without the skill of numbers. For instance, if I am to trade to Turkey, I ought beforehand to know the demand of our manufactures there as well as of their silks in England, and the customary prices that are given for both in each country. I ought to have a clear knowledge of these matters beforehand, that I may presume upon sufficient returns to answer the charge of the cargo I have fitted out, the freight and insurance out and home, the customs to the Queen,²⁹ and the interest of my own money, and besides all these expenses a reasonable profit to myself. Now what is there of scandal in this skill? What has the merchant done that he should be so little

in the good graces of Sir Roger? He throws down no man's enclosures, and tramples upon no man's corn.³⁰ He takes nothing from the industrious labourer; he pays the poor man for his work. He communicates³¹ his profit with mankind. By the preparation of his cargo and the manufacture of his returns, he furnishes employment and subsistence to greater numbers than the richest nobleman; and even the nobleman is obliged to him for finding out foreign markets for the produce of his estate, and for making a great addition to his rents. And yet 'tis certain that none of all these things could be done by him without the exercise of his skill in numbers.

This is the economy of the merchant, and the conduct of the gentleman must be the same, unless by scorning to be the steward,³² he resolves the steward shall be the gentleman. The gentleman no more than the merchant is able without the help of numbers to account for the success of any action, or the prudence of any adventure. If, for instance, the chase is his whole adventure, his only returns must be the stag's horns in the great hall, and the fox's nose upon the stable door. Without doubt Sir Roger knows the full value of these returns; and if beforehand he had computed the charges of the chase, a gentleman of his discretion would certainly have hanged up all his dogs, he would never have brought back so many fine hcrses to the kennel, he would never have gone so often like a blast³³ over fields of corn. If such too had been the conduct of all his ancestors, he might truly have boasted at this day that the antiquity of his family had never been³⁴ sullied by a trade; a merchant had never been permitted with his whole estate to purchase a room

for his picture in the gallery ³⁵ of the Coverleys, or to claim his descent from the maid of honour.³⁶ But 'tis very happy for the merchant that Sir Roger paid so dear for his ambition. 'Tis the misfortune of many other gentlemen to turn out of ³⁷ the seats of their ancestors, to make way for such new masters as have been more exact in their accounts than themselves. And certainly he deserves the estate a great deal better who has got it by his industry, than he who has lost it by his negligence.³⁸

NOTES

1. *subsist*, continue to exist.
2. *old Roman fable*, narrated by Shakespeare in *Coriolanus*.
3. *the landed man*, the owner of a large estate in the country: the class to which Sir Roger de Coverley belonged.
4. *Carthaginian faith*, sometimes called Punic faith. The Romans and the people of Carthage were deadly enemies, and the former attributed every variety of treachery to the latter.
5. *leagues*, treaties.
6. *cozenage*, cheating; a rather old-fashioned word.
7. *let frugality*, while admitting that frugality.
8. *the virtues of the merchant*. Sir Roger has the rather narrow conservatism of the English aristocracy.
9. *punctual dealing*, prompt payment of his debts, regular settlement of his accounts.
10. *diligent in hearing*, listening very attentively; a rather archaic expression.
11. *had a mind to*, desired to, intended to.
12. *discourse*, conversation, discussion.
13. *by taking notice*, by asserting that, by bringing it to our notice that.
14. *repines at*, is discontented with, jealous of.
15. *rallies*, makes fun of, questions jokingly.
16. *horse and foot*, cavalry and infantry.

17. *quarters*, a halting-place while waiting for hire.

18. *the way*, the right of way through the streets.

19. *paid me off*, left me without a word to say in defence.

An example of Steele's more colloquial and idiomatic style.

20. *monuments of charity and public spirit*, hospitals, schools, libraries, &c., founded and endowed by merchant princes. The Parsi community in Bombay provides a striking example of this public spirit.

21. *if it were consistent*. Sir Andrew is being mildly satirical.

22. *artificers, working-men*. The modern meaning is rather 'craftsman'.

23. *on Sir Roger's charge*, at his expense.

24. *in very little pain*, very little concerned about.

25. *break*, become bankrupt; another instance of the more idiomatic vocabulary of Steele.

26. *that exact nation*, the Dutch being scrupulously honest.

27. *impertinently sanguine*, confident without any good foundation.

28. *hazard*, risk.

29. *the Queen*, because Steele was writing in the reign of Queen Anne.

30. *throws down . . . tramples*, which happens during hunting.

31. *communicates*, shares.

32. *to be the steward*, i.e. to look after his own accounts.

33. *like a blast*, destructively.

34. *had never been*, would never have been.

35. *gallery*. In *Spectator* No. 109 Steele describes Sir Roger's picture-gallery of his ancestors.

36. *maid of honour*. Another example of Sir Andrew's irony. Some noble families had for their foundress a king's mistress.

37. *to turn out of*, to be forced to leave.

38. *negligence*. Steele finishes off the essay with a good example of the antithetical sentence.

EXERCISES

1. Fill in the details of Sir Andrew's character by a reference to *Spectator* No. 2.

2. Show that Steele uses the idiom of the age more freely than Addison.

3. How far do you agree that "Addison composes, Steele just runs on"?

4. Discuss the good and the bad in English hunting.

5. "The mark of his persiflage is not the butt of his scorn." Show that this is true of both Addison and Steele.

6. Explain what Hazlitt (in No. 9) means when he refers to the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* in these words: "Learning sacrificing to the graces."

7. Give some examples of Steele's rhetorical style and of his use of figurative language.

8. Mr. Freeman (in No. 25) defines the Periodical Essay as "Genius come to town". Give a summary of what he says about Addison and Steele, and explain carefully what he means.

No. 4.—Hints toward an Essay on Conversation

JONATHAN SWIFT

Jonathan Swift was born, like Steele, in Dublin, the year of his birth being 1667. He was educated at the famous Trinity College in that town. His first employment in England was as secretary to Sir William Temple at Moor Park in Surrey. In 1701 he took his Doctor's degree at his University, and three years later published the *Battle of the Books* and *A Tale of a Tub*. The latter is in some respects his greatest satire. Hating the Dissenters, he became the mouthpiece and champion of the Tory party in England, e.g. in *The Conduct of the Allies*. His *Journal to Stella* is one of the most remarkable personal documents in literary history. The year 1726 saw the publication of the immortal *Gulliver's Travels*. He died in 1745.

Swift's style is clear, precise and exact. He has, perhaps, more power of language than either Addison or Steele, and he occasionally employs strange words. In all his writings there is undoubted evidence of a first-class brain, a powerful mind, a clear-working intellect. Like Bacon he chooses to seize upon the defects rather than the virtues of his fellow-men: he is pre-eminently the satirist of *Gulliver's Travels*; but at times he gives utterance to great and profound thoughts.

I have observed few obvious subjects to have been so seldom, or at least so slightly, handled as this; and, indeed, I know few so difficult to be treated as it ought, nor yet upon which there seems so much to be said.

Most things pursued by men for the happiness of public or private life, our wit or folly have so refined, that they seldom subsist ¹ but in idea; a true friend,² a good marriage, a perfect form of government, with some others, require so many ingredients, so good in their several kinds, and so much niceness ³ in mixing them, that for some thousands of years men have despaired of reducing their schemes to perfection: but in conversation it is, or might be, otherwise; for here we are only to avoid a multitude of errors, which, although a matter of some difficulty, may be in every man's power, for want of which it remains as mere an idea as the other. Therefore it seems to me, that the truest way to understand conversation, is to know the faults and errors ⁴ to which it is subject, and from thence every man to form maxims to himself whereby it may be regulated, because it requires few talents to which most men are not born, or at least may not acquire, without any great genius or study. For nature has left every man a capacity of being agreeable, though not of shining in company; and there are a hundred men sufficiently qualified for both, who, by a very few faults that they might correct in half an hour, are not so much as tolerable.

I was prompted to write my thoughts upon this subject by mere indignation, to reflect that so useful and innocent a pleasure, so fitted for every period and condition of life, and so much in all men's power, should be so much neglected and abused.

And in this discourse it will be necessary to note those errors that are obvious, as well as others which are seldom observed, since there are few so obvious, or

acknowledged, into which most men, some time or other, are not apt to run.

For instance; nothing is more generally exploded ⁵ than the folly of talking too much; yet I rarely remember to have seen five people together, where some one among them has not been predominant in that kind, to the great constraint and disgust of all the rest. But among such as deal in multitudes of words, none are comparable to the sober, deliberate talker, who proceeds with much thought and caution, makes his preface, branches out into several digressions, finds a hint that puts him in mind of another story, which he promises to tell you when this is done; comes back regularly to his subject, cannot readily call to mind some person's name, holding his head, complains of his memory; the whole company all this while in suspense; at length says, it is no matter, and so goes on. And, to crown the business, it perhaps proves at last a story the company has heard fifty times before; or, at best, some insipid adventure ⁶ of the relater.

Another general fault in conversation is that of those who affect to talk of themselves: some, without any ceremony,⁷ will run over the history of their lives; will relate the annals of their diseases, with the several symptoms and circumstances of them; will enumerate the hardships and injustice they have suffered in court, in parliament, in love, or in law. Others are more dexterous, and with great art will lie on the watch to hook in ⁸ their own praise: they will call a witness to remember they always foretold what would happen in such a case, but none would believe them; they advised such a man from the beginning, and told him the consequences, just as they

happened; but he would have his own way. Others make a vanity of telling their faults; they are the strangest men in the world; they cannot dissemble; they own it is a folly; they have lost abundance of advantages by it; but if you would give them the world,⁹ they cannot help it; there is something in their nature that abhors insincerity and constraint; with many other insufferable topics of the same altitude.¹⁰

Of such mighty importance every man is to himself, and ready to think he is so to others; without once making this easy and obvious reflection, that his affairs can have no more weight with other men, than theirs have with him; and how little that is he is sensible¹¹ enough.

Where a company has met, I often have observed two persons discover, by some accident, that they were bred together at the same school or university: after which the rest are condemned to silence, and to listen while these two are refreshing each other's memory with the arch tricks and passages¹² of themselves and their comrades.

I know a great officer of the army who will sit for some time with a supercilious and impatient silence, full of anger and contempt for those who are talking; at length, of a sudden, demanding audience, decide the matter in a short dogmatical way; then withdraw within himself again, and vouchsafe to talk no more, until his spirits circulate again to the same point.

There are some faults in conversation which none are so subject to as the men of wit, nor ever so much as when they are with each other. If they have opened their

mouths without endeavouring to say a witty thing, they think it so many words lost: it is a torment to the hearers, as much as to themselves, to see them upon the rack for invention,¹³ and in perpetual constraint, with so little success. They must do something extraordinary in order to acquit themselves, and answer their character, else the standers-by may be disappointed, and be apt to think them only like the rest of mortals. I have known two men of wit industriously brought together in order to entertain the company, where they have made a very ridiculous figure,¹⁴ and provided all the mirth at their own expense.

I know a man of wit who is never easy but where he can be allowed to dictate and preside: he neither expects to be informed or entertained, but to display his own talents. His business is to be good company, and not good conversation; and therefore he chooses to frequent those who are content to listen, and profess themselves his admirers. And, indeed, the worst conversation I ever remember to have heard in my life was that at Will's coffee-house,¹⁵ where the wits (as they were called) used formerly to assemble; that is to say, five or six men who had written plays, or at least prologues, or had share in a miscellany, came thither, and entertained one another with their trifling composures,¹⁶ in so important an air as if they had been the noblest efforts of human nature, or that the fate of kingdoms depended on them; and they were usually attended with a humble audience of young students from the inns of court, or the universities; who, at due distance, listened to these oracles, and returned home with great contempt for their law and philosophy,

their heads filled with trash, under the name of politeness, criticism, and *belles lettres*.¹⁷

By these means the poets, for many years past, were all overrun with pedantry. For, as I take it, the word is not properly used; because pedantry¹⁸ is the too frequent or unseasonable obtruding our own knowledge in common discourse, and placing too great a value upon it; by which definition, men of the court, or the army, may be as guilty of pedantry as a philosopher or a Jivine; and it is the same vice in women, when they are over-copious upon the subject of their petticoats or their fans, or their china. For which reason, although it be a piece of prudence, as well as good manners, to put men upon talking on subjects they are best versed in, yet that is a liberty a wise man could hardly take; because, besides the imputation of pedantry, it is what he would never improve by.

The great town is usually provided with some player, mimic, or buffoon, who has a general reception at the good tables; familiar and domestic with persons of the first quality, and usually sent for at every meeting to divert the company; against which I have no objection. You go there as to a farce or a puppet-show; your business is only to laugh in season,¹⁹ either out of inclination or civility, while this merry companion is acting his part. It is a business he has undertaken, and we are to suppose he is paid for his day's work. I only quarrel, when, in select and private meetings, where men of wit and learning are invited to pass an evening, this jester should be admitted to run over his circle of tricks, and make the whole company unfit for any other conversation, beside

the indignity of confounding men's talents at so shameful a rate.

Raillery is the finest part of conversation; but, as it is our usual custom to counterfeit and adulterate whatever is too dear ²⁰ for us, so we have done with this, and turned it all into what is generally called repartee, or being smart; just as when an expensive fashion comes up, those who are not able to reach it content themselves with some paltry imitation. It now passes for raillery to run a man down in discourse, to put him out of countenance, and make him ridiculous; sometimes to expose the defects of his person or understanding; on all which occasions, he is obliged not to be angry, to avoid the imputation of not being able to take a jest. It is admirable to observe one who is dexterous at this art, singling out a weak adversary, getting the laugh on his side, and then carrying all before him. The French, from whom we borrow the word, have a quite different idea of the thing, and so had we in the politer age of our fathers.²¹ Raillery was to say something that at first appeared a reproach or reflection,²² but, by some turn of wit, unexpected and surprising, ended always in a compliment, and to the advantage of the person it was addressed to. And surely one of the best rules ²³ in conversation is, never to say a thing which any of the company can reasonably wish we had rather left unsaid: nor can there well be anything more contrary to the ends for which people meet together, than to part unsatisfied with each other or themselves.

There are two faults in conversation, which appear very different, yet arise from the same root, and are equally blameable; I mean an impatience to interrupt others;

and the uneasiness of being interrupted ourselves. The two chief ends of conversation are to entertain and improve those we are among, or to receive those benefits ourselves; which whoever will consider, cannot easily run into either of these two errors; because, when any man speaks in company, it is to be supposed he does it for his hearers' sake, and not his own; so that common discretion will teach us not to force their attention, if they are not willing to lend it; nor, on the other side, to interrupt him who is in possession,²⁴ because that is in the grossest manner to give the preference to our own good sense.

There are some people whose good manners will not suffer them to interrupt you, but, what is almost as bad, will discover²⁵ abundance of impatience, and lie upon the watch until you have done, because they have started something in their own thoughts, which they long to be delivered of. Meantime, they are so far from regarding what passes, that their imaginations are wholly turned upon what they have in reserve, for fear it should slip out of their memory; and thus they confine their invention,²⁶ which might otherwise range over a hundred things full as good, and that might be much more naturally introduced.

There is a sort of rude familiarity, which some people by practising among their intimates, have introduced into their general conversation, and would have it pass for innocent freedom or humour; which is a dangerous experiment in our northern climate, where all the little decorum and politeness we have is purely forced by art, and is so ready to lapse into barbarity. This, among

the Romans, was the raillery of slaves, of which we have many instances in Plautus.²⁷ It seems to have been introduced among us by Cromwell,²⁸ who, by preferring the scum of the people, made it a court entertainment, of which I have heard many particulars; and, considering all things were turned upside down, it was reasonable and judicious; although it was a piece of policy found out to ridicule a point of honour in the other extreme, when the smallest word misplaced among gentlemen ended in a duel.

There are some men excellent at telling a story, and provided with a plentiful stock of them, which they can draw out upon occasion in all companies; and, considering how low conversation²⁹ runs now among us, it is not altogether a contemptible talent; however, it is subject to two unavoidable defects, frequent repetition, and being soon exhausted; so that, whoever values this gift in himself, has need of a good memory, and ought frequently to shift his company, that he may not discover the weakness of his fund; for those who are thus endued have seldom any other revenue, but live upon the main stock.

Great speakers in public are seldom agreeable in private conversation, whether their faculty be natural, or acquired by practice, and often venturing. Natural elocution, although it may seem a paradox,³⁰ usually springs from a bareness of invention, and of words; by which men who have only one stock of notions upon every subject, and one set of phrases to express them in, they swim upon the superficies,³¹ and offer themselves on every occasion; therefore men of much learning, and who know the com-

pass of ³² a language, are generally the worst talkers on a sudden, until much practice has inured and emboldened them; because they are confounded with plenty of matter, variety of notions and of words, which they cannot readily choose, but are perplexed and entangled by too great a choice; which is no disadvantage in private conversation; where, on the other side, the talent of haranguing is, of all others, most unsupportable.

Nothing has spoiled men more for conversation than the character of being wits; to support which they never fail of encouraging a number of followers and admirers, who list themselves in their service, wherein they find their accounts on both sides by pleasing their mutual vanity. This has given the former such an air of superiority, and made the latter so pragmatICAL, that neither of them are well to be endured. I say nothing here of the itch of dispute and contradiction, telling of lies, or of those who are troubled with the disease called the wandering of the thoughts, so that they are never present in mind at what passes in discourse; for whoever labours under any of these possessions, is as unfit for conversation as a madman in Bedlam.

I think I have gone over most of the errors in conversation that have fallen under my notice or memory, except some that are merely personal, and others too gross to need exploding; such as lewd or profane talk; but I pretend only to treat the errors of conversation in general, and not the several subjects of discourse, which would be infinite. Thus we see how human nature is most debased, by the abuse of that faculty which is held the great distinction between men and brutes: and how little

advantage we make of that, which might be the greatest, the most lasting, and the most innocent, as well as useful pleasure of life: in default of which we are forced to take up with those poor amusements of dress and visiting, or the more pernicious ones of play, drink, and vicious amours; ³³ whereby the nobility and gentry of both sexes are entirely corrupted, both in body and mind, and have lost all notions of love, honour, friendship, generosity: which, under the name of fopperies, have been for some time laughed out of doors.

This degeneracy of conversation, with the pernicious consequences thereof upon our humours ³⁴ and dispositions, has been owing, among other causes, to the custom arisen, for some time past, of excluding women from any share in our society, further than at parties at play, or dancing, or in the pursuit of an amour. I take the highest period of politeness in England (and it is of the same date in France) to have been the peaceable part of King Charles I's reign, and from what we read of those times, as well as from the accounts I have formerly met with from some who lived in that court, the methods then used for raising and cultivating conversation were altogether different from ours: several ladies, whom we find celebrated by the poets of that age, had assemblies at their houses, where persons of the best understanding, and of both sexes, met to pass the evenings in discoursing upon whatever agreeable subjects were occasionally started; although we are apt to ridicule the sublime Platonic ³⁵ notions they had, or personated, in love and friendship, I conceive their refinements were grounded upon reason, and that a little grain of the romantic ³⁶ is no ill ingredient to preserve

and exalt the dignity of human nature, without which it is apt to degenerate into everything that is sordid, vicious, and low. If there were no other use in the conversation of ladies, it is sufficient that it would lay a restraint upon those odious topics of immodesty and indecencies, into which the rudeness of our northern genius³⁷ is so apt to fall. And, therefore, it is observable in those sprightly gentlemen about the town, who are so very dexterous at entertaining a vizard mask³⁸ in the park or the playhouse, that in the company of ladies of virtue and honour, they are silent and disconcerted, and out of their element.

There are some people who think they sufficiently acquit themselves, and entertain their company, with relating facts of no consequence, nor at all out of the road of such common incidents as happen every day; and this I have observed more frequently among the Scots than any other nation, who are very careful not to omit the minutest circumstances of time or place; which kind of discourse, if it were not a little relieved by the uncouth terms and phrases, as well as accent and gesture peculiar to that country, would be hardly tolerable. It is not a fault in company to talk much; but to continue it long is certainly one; for, if the majority of those who are got together be naturally silent or cautious, the conversation will flag, unless it be often renewed by one among them, who can start new subjects, provided he does not dwell upon them, but leaves room for answers and replies.

NOTES

1. *subsist*, exist.
2. *a true friend*. Here we may observe the cynicism and ironical spirit which are generally associated with Dean Swift.
3. *niceness*, care.
4. *faults and errors*. Like Bacon, Swift is prone to dwell upon the imperfections of mankind. Addison and Steele have greater magnanimity.
5. *exploded*, expressed universally.
6. *insipid adventure*. Swift is, as usual, cruel and bitter.
7. *without any ceremony*, without apology.
8. *to hook in*, to manage the conversation so that they may speak in praise of themselves.
9. *give them the world*, give them everything in the world.
10. *of the same altitude*, in the same strain.
11. *he is sensible*, he knows fully. Again the spirit of cynicism.
12. *passages*, events, incidents.
13. *upon the rack for invention*, torturing themselves in their desire to think of something original or witty to say.
14. *a very ridiculous figure*. Again the cynical outlook.
15. *Will's coffee-house*, a famous meeting-place of the wits.
16. *composures*, compositions.
17. *belles lettres* (French), studies and writings of a purely literary kind.
18. *pedantry*. Contrast this definition of pedantry with what Hazlitt says in No. 9: "He who is not in some measure a pedant, though he may be a wise, cannot be a very happy man."
19. *laugh in season*, laugh at the proper times.
20. *too dear*, too intricate and difficult.
21. *politer age of our fathers*. Many writers have looked into the past for the Golden Age.
22. *reflection*, censure.
23. *one of the best rules*. Here we have a universal truth expressed with simplicity and clearness.

24. *is in possession*, is speaking.
25. *discover*, reveal.
26. *invention*, thought and imagination.
27. *Plautus*, Latin writer of comedies, twenty of which are extant. Among them are *Captivi*, *Rudens*, and *Aulularia*.
28. *Cromwell*, Oliver Cromwell, who became Protector of England in the seventeenth century. Swift was a Tory in politics, and had thus very little sympathy for the rule and opinions of Cromwell.
29. *how low conversation*, the low standard of conversation.
30. *a paradox*, a statement which appears absurd at first sight.
31. *superficies*, surface.
32. *know the compass of*, have command of the vocabulary of.
33. *vicious amours*, illicit love affairs.
34. *humours*, temperaments.
35. *Platonic*, innocent relations between the sexes.
36. *a little grain of the romantic*. Another very true utterance of this very great writer.
37. *northern genius*, English spirit and character.
38. *a vizard mask*, a lady wearing a mask (and presumably behaving with less than the usual feminine modesty).

EXERCISES

1. Compare Swift's outlook on life with Bacon's.
2. Discuss Swift's views on Pedantry and compare them with Hazlitt's.
3. Examine Swift's desire for 'a little grain of romance' in life.
4. Give some examples of the author's bitterness and cynicism.
5. Pick out some examples of wisdom in this essay.
6. What evidences do you find here of Swift's political opinions? Show that the intrusion of politics into the English Essay is rare. Can you suggest a reason?
7. What are the chief errors or faults in conversation?

No. 5.—The Study of Life and the Study of Books

DOCTOR SAMUEL JOHNSON

Dr. Samuel Johnson, the literary dictator of the eighteenth century, was born at Lichfield in 1709, and was educated at Pembroke College, Oxford. His *Vanity of Human Wishes*, a poem in which Sir Walter Scott took extreme delight, appeared in 1749, followed by the *Rambler* and *Idler* series, and in 1759 *Rasselas*. His *Lives of the Poets* appeared between 1779 and 1781. He died three years later. Of his remaining literary labours the *Dictionary* is the most famous; but his edition of Shakespeare is remarkable for his ingenious and perspicuous readings of the text.

Any representative collection of essays must find a place for Dr. Johnson's work. His latinized style with its rather ponderous harmonies does not cease to attract; since it surprises and pleases by its occasional cadences and by its more frequent elegance and correctness. The learned Doctor may be long-winded, but he is seeking all the time to achieve a clear, definite, and unambiguous meaning; while nothing slipshod is permitted to disfigure his sentences. Properly directed, the study of Johnson's thoughtful style will afford a most valuable training to youthful writers of English.

This style reveals to us undoubted wealth of vocabulary and careful building up of sentences. Occasionally one comes upon a brilliant sentence but as a rule it is the high general standard which impresses. Always there is dignity; almost always there is clearness as well. Examples of climax and antithesis are frequent; sometimes we have harmony. His

sentiments are irreproachable; he writes good sense. Unfortunately, he reveals, as does Bacon, an absence of the sense of humour.

On life, on morals, be thy thoughts employed;
Leave to the schools ¹ their atoms and their void.

It is somewhere related by Le Clerc,² that a wealthy trader of good understanding, having the common ambition to breed his son as a scholar, carried him to a university, resolving to use his own judgment in the choice of a tutor. He had been taught, by whatever intelligence, the nearest way to the heart of an academic³ and at his arrival entertained all who came about him with such profusion, that the professors were lured by the smell of his table from their books, and flocked round him with all the cringes of awkward complaisance.⁴ This eagerness answered the merchant's purpose; he glutted them with delicacies, and softened them with caresses, till he prevailed upon one after another to open his bosom, and make a discovery of his competitions,⁵ jealousies, and resentments. Having thus learnt each man's character, partly from himself, and partly from his acquaintances, he resolved to find some other education for his son, and went away convinced, that a scholastic life has no other tendency than to vitiate the morals, and contract the understanding: nor would he afterwards hear with patience the praises of the ancient authors, being persuaded that scholars of all ages must have been the same, and that Xenophon and Cicero⁶ were professors of some former university, and therefore mean and selfish, ignorant and servile, like those whom he had lately visited and forsaken.

Envy, curiosity, and a sense of the imperfection of our present state, incline us to estimate the advantages which are in the possession of others, above their real value. Every one must have remarked, what powers and prerogatives the vulgar imagine to be conferred by learning. A man of science is expected to excel the unlettered and unenlightened even on occasions where literature is of no use, and among weak minds, loses part of his reverence, by discovering no superiority in those parts of life, in which all are unavoidably equal; as when a monarch⁷ makes a progress to the remoter provinces, and rustics are said sometimes to wonder that they find him of the same size as themselves.

These demands of prejudice and folly can never be satisfied; and therefore many of the imputations which learning suffers from disappointed ignorance, are without reproach. But there are some failures to which men of study are peculiarly exposed. Every condition has its disadvantages. The circle of knowledge is too wide for the most active and diligent intellect, and while science is pursued, other accomplishments are neglected; as a small garrison⁸ must leave one part of an extensive fortress naked, when an alarm calls them to another.

The learned, however, might generally support their dignity with more success, if they suffered not themselves to be misled by the desire of superfluous attainments. Raphael,⁹ in return to Adam's inquiries into the courses of the stars and the revolutions of heaven, counsels him to withdraw his mind from idle speculations, and employ his faculties upon nearer and more interesting objects, the survey of his own life, the subjection of his passions,

the knowledge of duties which must daily be performed, and the detection of dangers which must daily be incurred.

This angelic counsel every man of letters should always have before him. He that devotes himself to retired study, naturally sinks from omission to forgetfulness of social duties; he must be therefore sometimes awakened, and recalled to the general condition of mankind.

I am far from any intention to limit curiosity, or confine the labours of learning to arts of immediate and necessary use. It is only ¹⁰ from the various essays of experimental industry, and the vague excursions of minds set upon discovery, that any advancement of knowledge can be expected; and though many must be disappointed in their labours, yet they are not to be charged with having spent their time in vain; their example contributed to inspire emulation, and their miscarriages ¹¹ taught others the way to success.

But the distant hope of being one day useful or eminent, ought not to mislead us too far from that study, which is equally requisite to the great and mean, to the celebrated and obscure; the art of moderating the desires, of repressing the appetites; and of conciliating or retaining the favour of mankind.

No man can imagine the course of his own life, or the conduct of the world around him, unworthy his attention; yet among the sons of learning many seem to have thought of every thing rather than of themselves, and to have observed every thing but what passes before their eyes: many who toil through the intricacy of complicated systems, are insuperably embarrassed with the least perplexity in common affairs; many who compare the

actions, and ascertain the characters of ancient heroes, let their own days glide away without examination, and suffer vicious habits to encroach upon their minds without resistance or detection.

The most frequent reproach of the scholastic race is the want of fortitude, not material but philosophic. Men bred in shades and silence, taught to immure themselves at sunset, and accustomed to no other weapon than the syllogism, may be allowed to feel terror at personal danger, and to be disconcerted by tumult and alarm. But why should he whose life is spent in contemplation, and whose business is only to discover truth, be unable to rectify the fallacies of imagination, or contend successfully against prejudice and passion? To what end has he read and meditated, if he gives up his understanding to false appearances, and suffers himself to be enslaved by fear of evils to which only folly or vanity can expose him, or elated by advantages to which, as they are equally conferred upon the good and bad, no real dignity is annexed?

Such, however,¹² is the state of the world, that the most obsequious of the slaves of pride, the most rapturous of the gazers upon wealth, the most officious of the whisperers of greatness, are collected from seminaries appropriated to the study of wisdom and of virtue, where it was intended that appetite should learn to be content with little, and that hope should aspire only to honours which no human power can give or take away.

The student, when he comes forth into the world, instead of congratulating himself upon his exemption from the errors of those whose opinions have been

formed by accident or custom, and who live without any certain principles of conduct, is commonly in haste to mingle with the multitude, and show his sprightliness and ductility ¹³ by an expeditious compliance with fashions or vices. The first smile of a man, whose fortune gives him power to reward his dependents, commonly enchants him beyond resistance; the glare of equipage, the sweets of luxury, the liberality of general promises, the softness of habitual affability, fill his imagination; and he soon ceases to have any other wish than to be well received, or any measure of right or wrong but the opinion of his patron.

A man flattered and obeyed learns to exact grosser adulation, and enjoin lower submission. Neither our virtues nor vices are all our own. If there were no cowardice, there would be little insolence; pride cannot rise to any great degree, but by the concurrence of blandishment or the sufferance of tameness. The wretch ¹⁴ who would shrink and crouch before one that should dart his eye upon him with the spirit of natural equality, becomes capricious and tyrannical when he sees himself approached with a downcast look, and hears the soft address of awe and servility. To those who are willing to purchase favour by cringes and compliance, is to be imputed the haughtiness that leaves nothing to be hoped by firmness and integrity.

If, instead of wandering after the meteors of philosophy, which fill the world with splendour for a while, and then sink and are forgotten, the candidates of learning fixed their eyes upon the permanent lustre of moral and religious truth, they would find a more certain direction to happi-

ness. A little plausibility of discourse, and acquaintance with unnecessary speculations, is dearly purchased, when it excludes those instructions which fortify the heart with resolution, and exalt the spirit to independence.

NOTES

1. *schools*, the philosophers.
2. *Le Clerc*, Jean Le Clerc was born at Geneva in 1657 and died in 1736. He was a Swiss Protestant theologian, and published Biblical commentaries.
3. *an academic*: Johnson uses the word in an old-fashioned sense.
4. *the cringes of awkward complaisance*. A good example of Johnson's skill in making rotund and admirable phrases, called by his detractors 'Johnsonese'.
5. *competitions*, another word used with an old-fashioned meaning.
6. *Xenophon* and *Cicero*, two classical writers. The *Anabasis*, or March of the Ten Thousand, by Xenophon, a Greek, is a vivid account of the retreat of Cyrus's army in Asia Minor, and a familiar textbook for Greek studies. *Cicero* was a celebrated Roman author and orator.
7. *as when a monarch*. One notes that the use of a good comparison to help out the meaning is not a practice confined to poetry.
8. *as a small garrison*. See above note.
9. *Raphael*, in the Eighth Book of *Paradise Lost*. Students should examine carefully Johnson's excellent summary.
10. *It is only*. The construction of this sentence exemplifies Johnson's prose style.
11. *miscarriages*, another word used in an obsolete sense.
12. *Such, however*. Another excellent example of careful sentence-building. As an exercise students should reproduce it in simple English. Note that a rather subtle alliterative scheme contributes to the smoothness.

13. *ductility*, docility; the latinized form of the doublet. In modern usage *docility* is the general term, the other being reserved for science.

14. *The wretch*. This sentence affords some excellent examples of that remarkable mannerism in English, referred to in the Introduction, of using words in pairs. Note here *shrink and crouch*, *capricious and tyrannical*, *awe and servility*, *cringes and compliance*, *firmness and integrity*. One feels that it is *part and parcel* of the natural style of such a typical Englishman as Dr. Johnson.

EXERCISES

1. Upon what, according to Dr. Johnson, do the 'candidates of learning' fix their eyes?
2. Explain the paradox that men of learning should be 'the most officious of the whisperers of greatness'.
3. Give examples of Johnson's fondness for (a) words in pairs, (b) alliteration, (c) antithesis, (d) climax.
4. Estimate the value of a good figure of speech.
5. What evidences do you find in this essay of Dr. Johnson's learning?

No. 6.—Happiness

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

An Irishman like Steele, son of an Irish clergyman, Goldsmith was born at Pallas, County Longford, in 1728. He took his degree at Trinity College, Dublin, in 1749, thereafter studying medicine at Edinburgh and Leyden. His rambling nature, however, soon sent him wandering through Europe with his flute. By 1756 he was in London, and on the edge of destitution. In 1760 appeared the articles known as *The Citizen of the World*: 1764 saw the publication of *The Traveller* and 1766 of *The Vicar of Wakefield*. These were followed by *The Good Natur'd Man*, a comedy, *The Deserted Village*, a poem, and *She Stoops to Conquer*, also a comedy. He died in 1774.

"The gentlest spirit that ever wrote with pen, he strangely endears himself to his audience, since in the clear mirror of his verse are reflected the sweetness and magnanimity of an angelic nature. Even his irony is tender, and his humour a summer lightning." So writes a modern critic. Dr. Johnson's Latin inscription for his monument in Westminster Abbey bears equal tribute to Goldsmith. Translated it reads: There was scarce a literary form that he did not touch, none that he touched did he fail to adorn.

The essay on "Happiness" is from *The Citizen of the World*, purporting to be the views of a Chinese visitor on contemporary English society. Here Goldsmith's work invites comparison with that of Steele and Addison, as he, like them, pokes fun at his own generation; and, perhaps, more humour than satire. This essay contains, however, only general reflections; but these are wise, optimistic, and beneficial to humanity. Goldsmith's style is as careful as Addison's, and much simpler

than Johnson's; there is in it a pleasing balance of thoughts, artificial but effective. The student should mark the occasional paradox, the frequent metaphor or simile, and the touches of gentle irony here and there. The mannerisms of Dr. Johnson's style are conspicuously absent.

It is impossible to form a philosophic system of happiness which is adapted to every condition in life, since every person who travels in this great pursuit takes a separate road. The differing colours which suit different complexions are not more various than the different pleasures appropriated to particular minds. The various sects who have pretended to give lessons to instruct men in happiness have described their own particular sensations, without considering ours; have only loaded their disciples with constraint, without adding to their real felicity.

If I find pleasure in dancing, how ridiculous would it be in me to prescribe such an amusement for the entertainment of a cripple: should he, on the other hand, place his chief delight in painting, yet would he be absurd in recommending the same relish to one who had lost the power of distinguishing colours. General directions are, therefore, commonly useless: and to be particular would exhaust volumes, since each individual may require a particular system of precepts to direct his choice.

Every mind seems capable of entertaining a certain quantity of happiness, which no institutions can increase, no circumstances alter, and entirely independent of fortune. Let any man compare his present fortune with the past, and he will probably find himself, upon the whole, neither better nor worse than formerly.

Gratified ambition, or irreparable calamity, may produce transient sensations of pleasure or distress. Those storms may discompose in proportion as they are strong, or the mind is pliant to their impression. But the soul, though at first lifted up by the event, is every day operated upon with diminished influence, and at length subsides into the level of its usual tranquillity. Should some unexpected turn of fortune take thee ¹ from fetters, and place thee on a throne, exultation would be natural upon the change; but the temper, like the face, would soon resume its native serenity.

Every wish, therefore, which leads us to expect happiness somewhere else but where we are, every institution which teaches us that we should be better by being possessed of something new, which promises to lift us a step higher than we are, only lays a foundation for uneasiness, because it contracts debts which we cannot repay; it calls that a good, which, when we have found it, will in fact add nothing to our happiness.

To enjoy the present, without regret for the past, or solicitude for the future, has been the advice rather of poets than philosophers. And yet the precept seems more rational than is generally imagined.² It is the only general precept respecting the pursuit of happiness, that can be applied with propriety to every condition of life. The man of pleasure, the man of business, and the philosopher, are equally interested in its disquisition.³ If we do not find happiness in the present moment, in what shall we find it? either in reflecting on the past, or prognosticating the future. But let us see how these are capable of producing satisfaction.

A remembrance of what is past and an anticipation of what is to come seem to be the two faculties by which man differs most from other animals. Though brutes enjoy them in a limited degree, yet their whole life seems taken up in the present, regardless of the past and the future. Man, on the contrary, endeavours to derive his happiness, and experiences most of his miseries, from these two sources.

Is this superiority of reflection a prerogative of which we should boast, and for which we should thank nature? or is it a misfortune of which we should complain, and be humble? ⁴ Either from the abuse, or from the nature of things, it certainly makes our condition more miserable.

Had we a privilege of calling up, by the power of memory, only such passages as were pleasing, unmixed with such as were disagreeable, we might then excite, at pleasure, an ideal happiness, perhaps more poignant than actual sensation. But this is not the case: the past is never represented without some disagreeable circumstance, which tarnishes all its beauty; the remembrance of an evil carries in it nothing agreeable, and to remember a good is always accompanied with regret.⁵ Thus we lose more than we gain by the remembrance.

And we shall find our expectation of the future to be a gift more distressful even than the former. To fear an approaching evil is certainly a most disagreeable sensation; and in expecting an approaching good we experience the inquietude of wanting actual possession.

Thus, whichever way we look, the prospect is disagreeable. Behind, we have left pleasures we shall never more enjoy, and therefore regret; and before, we see

pleasures which we languish to possess, and are consequently uneasy till we possess them. Was there any method of seizing the present, unembittered by such reflections, then would our state be tolerably easy.

This, indeed, is the endeavour of all mankind, who, untutored by philosophy, pursue as much as they can a life of amusement and dissipation. Every rank in life, and every size of understanding, seems to follow this alone; or not pursuing it, deviates from happiness. The man of pleasure pursues dissipation by profession; the man of business pursues it not less, as every voluntary labour he undergoes is only dissipation in disguise. The philosopher himself, even while he reasons upon the subject, does it unknowingly, with a view of dissipating the thoughts of what he was, or what he must be.

The subject, therefore, comes to this: Which is the most perfect sort of dissipation—pleasure, business, or philosophy? Which best serves to exclude those uneasy sensations which *memory* or *anticipation* produce?

The enthusiasm of pleasure charms only by intervals. The highest rapture lasts only for a moment; and all the senses seem so combined, as to be soon tired into languor by the gratification of any one of them. It is only among the poets we hear of men changing to one delight, when satiated with another. In nature it is very different: the glutton, when sated with the full meal, is unqualified to feel the real pleasure of drinking; the drunkard, in turn, finds few of those transports which lovers boast in enjoyment; and the poet, when cloyed, finds a diminution of every other appetite. Thus, after a full indulgence of any one sense, the man of pleasure finds a languor in all,

is placed in a chasm between past and expected enjoyment, perceives an interval which must be filled up. The present can give no satisfaction, because he has already robbed it of every charm: a mind thus left without immediate employment naturally recurs to the past or future; the reflector finds that he was happy, and knows that he cannot be so now; he sees that he may yet be happy, and wishes the hour was come: thus every period of his continuance is miserable, except that very short one of immediate gratification. Instead of a life of dissipation, none has more frequent conversations with disagreeable *self* than he: his enthusiasms are few but transient; his appetites, like angry creditors, continually making fruitless demands for what he is unable to pay; and the greater his former pleasures, the more strong his regret, the more impatient his expectations. A life of pleasure is therefore the most displeasing life in the world.⁶

Habit⁷ has rendered the man of business more cool in his desires; he finds less regret for past pleasures, and less solicitude for those to come. The life he now leads, though tainted in some measure with hope, is yet not afflicted so strongly with regret, and is less divided between short-lived rapture and lasting anguish. The pleasures he has enjoyed are not so vivid, and those he has to expect cannot consequently create so much anxiety.

The philosopher, who extends his regard to all mankind, must still have a smaller concern for what has already affected, or may hereafter affect, himself: the concerns of others make his whole study, and that study is his pleasure; and this pleasure is continuing in its nature, because it can be changed at will, leaving but few of these anxious

intervals which are employed in remembrance or anticipation. The philosopher by this means leads a life of almost continual dissipation; and reflection, which makes the uneasiness and misery of others, serves as a companion and instructor to him.

In a word, positive happiness is constitutional, and incapable of increase; misery is artificial, and generally proceeds from our folly. Philosophy can add to our happiness in no other manner but by diminishing our misery; it should not pretend to increase our present stock, but make us economists of what we are possessed of. The great source of calamity lies in regret or anticipation; he, therefore, is most wise who thinks of the present alone, regardless of the past or the future. This is impossible to the man of pleasure; it is difficult to the man of business; and is in some measure attainable by the philosopher. Happy were we all born philosophers, all born with a talent of thus dissipating our own cares, by spreading them upon all mankind!

NOTES

1. *take thee*, the Chinese visitor is writing to his friend in China.

2. *To enjoy . . . imagined*. Note the unexpectedness of Goldsmith's truths. They are rather paradoxical.

3. *disquisition*, exposition, proof.

4. *Is this . . . be humble*. Again the unexpected point of view surprises us.

5. *accompanied with regret*. See the above notes.

6. *A life . . . in the world*. A good example of paradox.

7. *Habit . . .*, notice the succession of balanced sentences in this paragraph.

EXERCISES

1. Explain why Goldsmith advises us to 'enjoy the present'.
2. Write an essay on the use of paradox, referring particularly to this and preceding essays.
3. What, according to Goldsmith, are the 'uneasy sensations' produced by (a) memory, and (b) anticipation?
4. What does the author mean by *dissipation*? Which is the most perfect form of dissipation?
5. Discuss: "A life of pleasure is the most unpleasing life in the world."

No. 7.—On Justice and Generosity

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

Lysippus is a man whose greatness of soul the whole world admires. His generosity is such that it prevents¹ a demand, and saves the receiver the trouble and the confusion of a request. His liberality also does not oblige more by its greatness than by his inimitable grace in giving. Sometimes he even distributes his bounties to strangers, and has been known to do good offices to those who professed themselves his enemies. All the world are unanimous in the praise of his generosity: there is only one sort of people who complain of his conduct—Lysippus does not pay his debts.

It is no difficult matter to account for a conduct so seemingly incompatible with itself. There is greatness in being generous, and there is only simple justice in satisfying his creditors.* Generosity is the part of a soul raised above the vulgar. There is in it something of what we admire in heroes, and praise with a degree of rapture. Justice, on the contrary, is a mere mechanic virtue, fit only for tradesmen, and what is practised by every broker in Change Alley.²

In paying his debts a man barely does his duty, and it is an action attended with no sort of glory. Should Lysippus satisfy his creditors, who would be at the pains

of telling it to the world? Generosity is a virtue of a very different complexion. It is raised above duty, and, from its elevation, attracts the attention and the praises of us little mortals below.

In this manner do men generally reason upon justice and generosity. The first is despised, though a virtue essential to the good of society; and the other attracts our esteem, which too frequently proceeds from an impetuosity of temper, rather directed by vanity than reason. Lysippus is told that his banker asks a debt of forty pounds, and that a distressed acquaintance petitions for the same sum. He gives it without hesitating to the latter; for he demands as a favour what the former requires as a debt.

Mankind in general are not sufficiently acquainted with the import of the word *justice*: it is commonly believed to consist only in a performance of those duties to which the laws of society can oblige us. This, I allow, is sometimes the import of the word, and in this sense justice is distinguished from equity; but there is a justice still more extensive; and which can be shown to embrace all the virtues united.

Justice may be defined to be that virtue which impels us to give to every person what is his due. In this extended sense of the word, it comprehends the practice of every virtue which reason prescribes or society should expect. Our duty to our Maker, to each other, and to ourselves, are fully answered, if we give them what we owe them. Thus justice, properly speaking, is the only virtue, and all the rest have their origin in it.

The qualities of candour, fortitude, charity, and gener-

osity, for instance, are not, in their own nature, virtues; and if ever they deserve the title, it is owing only to justice, which impels and directs them. Without such a moderator candour might become indiscretion, charity imprudence, and generosity mistaken profusion.

A disinterested action, if it be not conducted by justice, is at best indifferent in its nature, and not infrequently even turns to vice. The expenses of society, of presents, of entertainments, and the other helps to cheerfulness, are actions merely indifferent, when not repugnant to a better method of disposing of our superfluities; but they become vicious when they obstruct or exhaust our abilities from a more virtuous disposition of our circumstances.

True generosity is a duty as indispensably necessary as those imposed upon us by law. It is a rule imposed upon us by reason, which should be the sovereign law of a rational being. But this generosity does not consist in obeying every impulse of humanity, in following blind passion for our guide, and impairing our circumstances by present benefactions, so as to render us incapable of future ones.

Misers are generally characterized as men without honour or without humanity, who live only to accumulate, and to this passion sacrifice every other happiness. They have been described as madmen, who, in the midst of abundance, banish every pleasure, and make from imaginary wants real necessities. But few, very few, correspond to this exaggerated picture; and perhaps there is not one in whom all these circumstances are found united. Instead of this, we find the sober and

the industrious branded by the vain and the idle with this odious appellation; men who, by frugality and labour, raise themselves above their equals, and contribute their share of industry to the common stock.

Whatever the vain or the ignorant may say well were it for society had we more of this character among us. In general these close men are found at last the true benefactors of society. With an avaricious man we seldom lose in our dealings; but too frequently in our commerce with prodigality.

A French priest, whose name was Godinot, went for a long time by the name of the Griper. He refused to relieve the most apparent wretchedness, and, by a skilful management of his vineyard, had the good fortune to acquire immense sums of money. The inhabitants of Rheims, who were his fellow-citizens, detested him; and the populace, who seldom love a miser, wherever he went received him with contempt. He still, however, continued his former simplicity of life, his amazing and unremitted frugality. This good man had long perceived the wants of the poor in the city, particularly in having no water but what they were obliged to buy at an advanced price; wherefore that whole fortune which he had been amassing he laid out in an aqueduct, by which he did the poor more useful and lasting service than if he had distributed his whole income in charity every day at his door.

Among men long conversant with books we too frequently find those misplaced virtues of which I have been now complaining. We find the studious animated with a strong passion for the great virtues, as they are mistakenly called— and utterly forgetful of the ordinary ones. The

declamations of philosophy are generally rather exhausted on these supererogatory duties, than on such as are indispensably necessary. A man, therefore, who has taken his ideas of mankind from study alone, generally comes into the world with a heart melting at every fictitious distress. Thus he is induced, by misplaced liberality, to put himself into the indigent circumstances of the person he relieves.

I shall conclude this paper with the advice of one of the ancients to a young man whom he saw giving away all his substance to pretended distress. "It is possible that the person you relieve may be an honest man; and I know that you who relieve him are such. You see, then, by your generosity, you only rob a man who is certainly deserving, to bestow it on one who may possibly be a rogue; and, while you are unjust in rewarding uncertain merit, you are doubly guilty by stripping yourself."

NOTES

1. *prevents*, anticipates.
2. *Change Alley*, a business centre in eighteenth-century London.

EXERCISES

1. Give some examples of Goldsmith's 'gentle irony'.
2. Point out some of the obvious differences in the styles of Johnson and Goldsmith.
3. Some of the ideas in this essay have been expressed by Steele in *Trade and Conduct* (No. 2). Pick out the common ideas and discuss them.

4. Explain: 'Justice, properly speaking, is the only virtue.'
5. Discuss: 'Generosity does not consist in obeying every impulse of humanity.'
6. 'Men long conversant with books are forgetful of the ordinary virtues.' Summarize the views of Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson on studious and bookish men.

No. 8.—Captain Jackson

CHARLES LAMB

Lamb was born in London in 1775 and was educated at Christ's Hospital, where he met Coleridge. Soon after leaving school he received a post in the South Sea House, and later was appointed to a clerkship in the East India Company's office. Throughout his life he had to care for his sister Mary, who was subject to recurring fits of insanity. In 1807 the famous *Tales from Shakespeare*, their joint work, appeared. In 1808 Charles produced his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*, and the *Essays of Elia* began to appear in 1820. He died in 1834, the same year as his life-long friend Coleridge. Lamb is more whimsical, and perhaps even more tender, than either Steele or Goldsmith. His character sketches are all delightful; he has a fund of human sympathy and a rich vein of rather Puckish humour; while the self-revelation in his many personal touches is wholly his own, and constitutes one of his chief charms. Lamb's style is neither so clear nor so simple as that of his predecessors; it is conversational, lacks both restraint and formality, and is frequently rhetorical. It is yet none the less delightful.

Among the deaths in our obituary for this month, I observe with concern, "At his cottage on the Bath Road,¹ Captain Jackson."² The name and the attribution are common enough; but a feeling like reproach persuades me, that this could have been no other in fact than my dear old friend, who some five-and-twenty years ago

rented a tenement, which he was pleased to dignify with the appellation here used,³ about a mile from Westbourn Green.⁴ Alack, how good men, and the good turns they do us, slide out of memory, and are recalled but by the surprise of some such sad memento as that which now lies before us!

He whom I mean was a retired half-pay officer, with a wife and two grown-up daughters, whom he maintained with the port and notions⁵ of gentlewomen upon that slender professional allowance. Comely girls they were too.

And was I in danger of forgetting this man?—his cheerful suppers—the noble tone of hospitality, when first you set your foot in *the cottage*—the anxious ministrings about you, where little or nothing (God knows) was to be administered.—Althea's horn⁶ in a poor platter—the power of self-enchantment, by which, in his magnificent wishes to entertain you, he multiplied his means to bounties.

You saw with your bodily eyes indeed what seemed a bare scrag—cold savings from the foregone meal—remnant hardly sufficient to send a mendicant from the door contented. But in the copious will⁷—the revelling imagination of your host—the “mind, the mind, Master Shallow,”⁸ whole beeves⁹ were spread before you—hecatombs—no end appeared to the profusion.

It was the widow's cruse¹⁰—the loaves and fishes¹¹—carving could not lessen or helping diminish it—the stamina¹² were left—the elemental bone still flourished, divested of its accidents.¹³

“Let us live while we can,” methinks I hear the open-

handed creature exclaim; "while we have, let us not want"; "here is plenty left"; "want for nothing"—with many more such hospitable sayings, the spurs of appetite, and old concomitants of smoking boards, and feast-oppressed chargers.¹⁴ Then sliding a slender ratio of Single Gloucester¹⁵ upon his wife's plate, or the daughters', he would convey the remanent¹⁶ rind into his own, with a merry quirk of "the nearer the bone", &c., and declaring that he universally preferred the outside. For we had our table distinctions, you are to know, and some of us in a manner sate above the salt.¹⁷ None but his guest or guests dreamed of tasting flesh luxuries at night, the fragments were *vere hospitibus sacra*.¹⁸ But of one thing or another there was always enough, and leavings: only he would sometimes finish the remainder crust, to show that he wished no savings.

Wine we had none; nor, except, on very rare occasions, spirits; but the sensation of wine was there. Some thin kind of ale I remember—"British beverage", he would say. "Push about,¹⁹ my boys"; "Drink to your sweet-hearts, girls". At every meagre draught a toast must ensue, or a song. All the forms of good liquor were there, with none of the effects wanting. Shut your eyes, and you would swear a capacious bowl of punch was foaming in the centre, with beams of generous Port²⁰ or Madeira radiating to it from each of the table corners. You got flustered without knowing whence; tipsy upon words; and reeled under the potency of his unperforming²¹ Bacchanalian encouragements.

We had our songs—"Why, Soldiers, Why"—and the "British Grenadiers"—in which last we were all obliged

to bear chorus. Both the daughters sang. Their proficiency was a nightly theme ²²—the masters he had given them—the “no-expense” which he spared to accomplish them in a science ²³ “so necessary to young women”. But then—they could not sing “without the instrument”.

Sacred, and, by me, never-to-be-violated, Secrets of Poverty! Should I disclose your honest aims at grandeur, your makeshift efforts of magnificence? Sleep, sleep, with all thy broken keys, if one of the Lanch be extant; thrummed by a thousand ancestral thumbs; dear, cracked, spinnet ²⁴ of dearer Louisa! Without mention of mine, be dumb, thou thin accompanier ²⁵ of her thinner warble! A veil be spread over the dear delighted face of the well-deluded father, who now haply listening to cherubic notes, ²⁶ scarce feels sincerer pleasure than when she awakened thy time-shaken chords responsive to the twitterings of that slender image of a voice.

We were not without our literary talk either. It did not extend far, but as far as it went, it was good. It was bottomed well; had good grounds to go upon. In *the cottage* was a room, which tradition authenticated to have been the same in which Glover, in his occasional retirements, had penned the greater part of his *Leoridas*.²⁷ This circumstance was nightly quoted, though none of the present inmates, that I could discover, appeared ever to have met with the poem in question. But that was no matter. Glover had written there, and the anecdote was pressed into the account of the family importance. It diffused a learned air through the apartment, the little side casement of which (the poet's study window), opening upon a superb view as far as the pretty spire of

Harrow,²⁸ over domains and patrimonial acres, not a rood nor square yard whereof our host could call his own, yet gave occasion to an immoderate expansion of—vanity shall I call it?—in his bosom, as he showed them in a glowing summer evening. It was all his, he took it all in, and communicated rich portions of it to his guests. It was a part of his largess, his hospitality; it was going over his grounds; he was lord for the time of showing them, and you the implicit lookers-up to his magnificence.

He was a juggler, who threw mists before your eyes—you had no time to detect his fallacies. He would say, “Hand me the *silver* sugar tongs”; and before you could discover that it was a single spoon, and that *plated*,²⁹ he would disturb and captivate your imagination by a misnomer of “the urn” for a tea kettle; or by calling a homely bench a sofa. Rich men direct you to their furniture, poor ones divert you from it; he neither did one nor the other, but by simply assuming that everything was handsome about him, you were positively at a demur³⁰ what you did, or did not see, at *the cottage*. With nothing to live on, he seemed to live on everything. He had a stock of wealth in his mind; not that which is properly termed *content*, for in truth he was not to be *contained* at all, but overflowed all bounds by the force of a magnificent self-delusion.

Enthusiasm is catching; and even his wife, a sober native of North Britain,³¹ who generally saw things more as they were, was not proof against the continual collision³² of his credulity. Her daughters were rational and discreet young women; in the main, perhaps, not insensible³³ to their true circumstances. I have seen them assume a

thoughtful air at times. But such was the preponderating opulence of his fancy, that I am persuaded, not for any half hour together did they ever look their own prospects ³⁴ fairly in the face. There was no resisting the vortex of his temperament. His riotous imagination conjured up handsome settlements before their eyes, which kept them up ³⁵ in the eye of the world too, and seem at last to have realized themselves; for they both have married since, I am told, more than respectably.

It is long since, and my memory waxes dim on some subjects, or I should wish to convey some notion of the manner in which the pleasant creature described the circumstances of his own wedding-day. I faintly remember something of a chaise and four, in which he made his entry into Glasgow on that morning to fetch the bride home, or carry her thither, I forget which. It so completely made out the stanza of the old ballad: ³⁶

When we came down through Glasgow town,
We were a comely sight to see;
My love was clad in black velvet,
And I myself in cramasie.

I suppose it was the only occasion, upon which his own actual splendour at all corresponded with the world's notions on that subject. In homely cart, or travelling caravan, by whatever humble vehicle they chanced to be transported in less prosperous days, the ride through Glasgow came back upon his fancy, not as a humiliating contrast, but as a fair occasion for reverting to that one day's state. It seemed an " equipage stern " from which no power of fate or fortune, once mounted, had power thereafter to dislodge him.

There is some merit in putting a handsome face upon indigent circumstances. To bully and swagger away the sense of them before strangers, may not be always discommendable. Tibbs, and Bobadil,³⁷ even when detected, have more of our admiration than contempt. But for a man to put the cheat upon himself; to play the Bobadil at home; and, steeped in poverty up to the lips, to fancy himself all the while chin-deep in riches, is a strain of constitutiona¹ philosophy, and a mastery over fortune, which was reserved for my old friend Captain Jackson.

NOTES

1. *the Bath Road*, the road leading westwards out of London towards Bath. One should remember that Bath was a very famous resort of society in Lamb's youth.

2. *Captain Jackson*. This would appear to be Lamb's friend, Randal Norris, a former sub-treasurer of the Inner Temple.

3. *the appellation here used*, i.e. cottage.

4. *Westbourn Green*, a district of London.

5. *port and notions*, behaviour and ideas.

6. *Althea's horn*, an error for *Amalthea's* horn. Amalthea was the goat which suckled Zeus in his infancy, and whose horn became the Horn of Plenty or Cornucopia.

7. *the copious will*, the hospitable intention.

8. *Master Shallow*, a character in Shakespeare's *King Henry IV*.

9. *beeves*, oxen. Lamb likes old-fashioned words.

10. *widow's cruse*, the story of the widow's cruse of oil is told in 1 Kings, xvii.

11. *loaves and fishes*, Christ's parable, to be found in Luke, ix. 13.

12. *stamina*, again the unusual, arresting word.

13. *accidents*, i.e. without any meat on it; a rather out-of-the-way use of the word.

14. *chargers*, trays, &c. Another unusual word, reminiscent of the Bible.

15. *Single Gloucester*, a cheese which actually differs from Double Gloucester only in size, but which is commonly believed to be less rich.

16. *remanent*. Here we have an example of one peculiarity of Lamb's style, a fondness for the unusual word.

17. *above the salt*, i.e. in the places of honour as guests.

18. *vere hospitibus sacra* (Latin), in truth sacred to the guests.

19. *Push about*, pass the wine round the table.

20. *generous Port*, wine rich in flavour and taste.

21. *unperforming*, because there was nothing to drink.

22. *a nightly theme*, mentioned in conversation every night.

23. *in a science*, i.e. in music.

24. *spinet*, an early form of the piano.

25. *thin accompanier*. While one sister sang the other played an accompaniment on this old and faint-sounding spinnet.

26. *cherubic notes*. As the Captain is now in heaven he will probably be listening to angelic music.

27. *Leonidas*, a famous hero of Sparta. He inspired the heroic stand of the Greeks at Thermopylæ against the invading armies of Xerxes in the year 480 B.C.

28. *Harrow*, a western suburb of London, standing on high ground. The spire referred to is that of Harrow, where the famous English public school is situated.

29. *plated*, silver-plated, not genuine silver.

30. *at a demur*, rather confused. Again the rather unusual phrase.

31. *North Britain*, Scotland.

32. *collision of*, coming in contact with. Note the alliteration.

33. *not insensible*, understanding their position clearly enough.

34. *their own prospects*, or their future position.

35. *kept them up*, in social reputation, that is.

36. *old ballad*, "Waly, Waly, Love be Bonny"; quoted in Percy's Reliques.

37. *Tibbs and Bobadil*, Beau Tibbs, a character in Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, is described by Hazlitt as "the best comic sketch since the time of Addison; unrivalled in his finery, his vanity, and his poverty". Captain Bobadil, in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*, is a sketch of the adventurer of the day, corresponding to Scott's Michael Lam-bourne in *K. iiiiworth*. He is a braggart and a coward, full of extravagant affectations. His plan for the pacification of Europe, that each man of his prowess should kill his twenty enemies a day, seems a good solution of modern problems.

EXERCISES

1. Discuss: 'Lamb is less concerned with ideas than with people.'
2. Show that Lamb is 'a maker of phrases'.
3. Give instances of the old-world flavour of his style.
4. Discuss: 'The character of Captain Jackson is conceived in a spirit of paradox.'
5. Trace the vein of human sympathy in Steele, Goldsmith and Lamb.
6. Quote examples from this essay (and from others) of Lamb's love of literature.
7. In what fashion did Captain Jackson 'put a handsome face upon indigent circumstances'?

No. 9.—On Pedantry

WILLIAM HAZLITT

William Hazlitt was born at Maidstone in 1778 and he died in 1830. Amongst his chief works are *Lectures on English Poetry and Comic Writers* (1818-9), *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), and his *Essays*. He had been placed in the foremost rank of English critics, and Stevenson thought there was no one who could write like Hazlitt. His style has no blemishes, and is particularly free from mannerisms of any kind. Like Addison and Dr. Johnson his language is always dignified. He possesses a quiet satirical humour, and has more literary allusions than any of his predecessors except Charles Lamb. One rather unexpected gift is that of paradox; he surprises us with truths which we were not looking for.

The power of attaching an interest to the most trifling or painful pursuits, in which our whole attention and faculties are engaged, is one of the greatest happinesses of our nature. The common soldier mounts the breach with joy; the miser deliberately starves himself to death; the mathematician sets about extracting the cube root with a feeling of enthusiasm; and the lawyer sheds tears of admiration over *Coke upon Littleton*.¹ It is the same through human life. He who is not in some measure a pedant, though he may be a wise, cannot be a very happy man.

The chief charm of reading the old novels is from the

picture they give of the egotism of the characters, the importance of each individual to himself, and his fancied superiority over everyone else. We like, for instance, the pedantry of Parson Adams,² who thought a school-master the greatest character in the world, and that he was the greatest schoolmaster in it. We do not see any equivalent for the satisfaction which this conviction must have afforded him in the most nicely graduated scale of talents and accomplishments to which he was an utter stranger. When the old-fashioned Scotch pedagogue³ turns Roderick Random round and round, and surveys him from head to foot with such infinite surprise and laughter, at the same time breaking out himself into gestures and exclamations still more uncouth and ridiculous, who would wish to have deprived him of this burst of extravagant self-complacency? When our follies afford equal delight to ourselves and those about us, what is there to be desired more? We cannot discover the vast advantage of "seeing ourselves as others see us".⁴ It is better to have a contempt for anyone than for ourselves!

One of the most constant butts of ridicule, both in the old comedies and novels, is the professional jargon of the medical tribe. Yet it cannot be denied that this jargon, however affected it may seem, is the natural language of apothecaries and physicians, the mother-tongue of pharmacy! It is that by which their knowledge first comes to them, that with which they have the most obstinate associations, that in which they can express themselves the most readily and with the best effect upon their hearers: and though there may be some assumption

of superiority in all this, yet it is only by an effort of circumlocution that they could condescend to explain themselves in ordinary language. Besides, there is a delicacy at bottom; as it is the only language in which a nauseous medicine can be decorously administered, or a limb taken off with the proper degree of secrecy. If the most blundering coxcombs affect this language most, what does it signify, while they retain the same dignified notions of themselves and their art, and are equally happy in their knowledge and their ignorance? The ignorant and pretending physician is a capital character in Molière: ⁵ and, indeed, throughout his whole plays, the great source of the comic interest is in the fantastic exaggeration of blind self-love, in letting loose the habitual peculiarities of each individual from all restraint of conscious observation or self-knowledge, in giving way to that specific levity of impulse which mounts at once to the height of absurdity, in spite of the obstacles that surround it, as a fluid ⁶ in a barometer rises according to the pressure of the external air! His characters are almost always pedantic, and yet the most unconscious of all others. Take, for example, those two worthy gentlemen, Monsieur Jourdain and Monsieur Pourceaugnac.⁷

Learning and pedantry were formerly synonymous: and it was well when they were so. Can there be a higher satisfaction than for a man to understand Greek, and to believe that there is nothing else worth understanding? Learning is the knowledge of that which is not generally known. What an ease and a dignity in pretensions, founded on the ignorance of others! What a pleasure in wondering, what a pride in being wondered at! In the library of the

family where we were brought up, stood the *Fratres Poloni*; ⁸ and we can never forget or describe the feeling with which not only their appearance, but the names of the authors on the outside, inspired us. Pripiscovius, we remember, was one of the easiest to pronounce. The gravity of the contents seemed in proportion to the weight of the volumes; the importance of the subjects increased with our ignorance of them. The trivialness of the remarks, if ever we looked into them, the repetitions, the monotony, only gave a greater solemnity to the whole, as the slowness and minuteness of the evidence adds to the impressiveness of a judicial proceeding. We knew that the authors had devoted their whole lives to the production of these works, carefully abstaining from the introduction of anything amusing, or lively, or interesting. In ten folio volumes there was not one sally of wit, one striking reflection. What then must have been their sense of the importance of the subject, the profound stores of knowledge which they had to communicate! "From all this world's encumbrance they did themselves assail." Such was the notion we then had of this learned lumber; yet we would rather have this feeling again for one half-hour than be possessed of all the acuteness of Bayle ⁹ or the wit of Voltaire! ¹⁰

It may be considered as a sign of the decay of piety and learning, in modern times, that our divines no longer introduce texts of the original Scriptures into their sermons. The very sound of the original Hebrew or Greek would impress the hearer with a more lively faith in the sacred writers than any translation, however literal and correct. It may even be doubted whether the trans-

lation of the Scriptures into the vulgar tongue was any advantage to the people. The mystery in which particular points of faith were left involved, gave an awe and sacredness to religious opinions: the general purport of the truths and promises of revelation was made known by other means; and nothing beyond this general and implicit conviction can be obtained, where all is undefined and infinite.

Again, it may be questioned whether, in matters of mere human reasoning, much has been gained by the disuse of the learned languages. Sir Isaac Newton ¹¹ wrote in Latin; and it is perhaps one of Bacon's fopperies that he translated his works into English. If certain follies have been exposed by being stripped of their formal disguise, others have had a greater chance of succeeding, by being presented in a more pleasing and popular shape. This has been remarkably the case in France (the least pedantic country in the world), where the women mingle with everything, even with metaphysics, and where all philosophy is reduced to a set of phrases for the toilette. When books are written in the prevailing language of the country, everyone becomes a critic who can read. An author is no longer tried by his peers. A species of universal suffrage is introduced in letters, which is only applicable to politics. The good old Latin style of our forefathers, if it concealed the dullness of the writer, at least was a barrier against the impertinence, flippancy, and ignorance of the reader. However, the immediate transition from the pedantic to the popular style in literature was a change that must have been very delightful at the time. Our illustrious predecessors, the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, were very happily

off in this respect. They wore the public favour in its newest gloss, before it had become tarnished and common—before familiarity had bred contempt. Their *Essays* were among the first instances in this country of learning sacrificing to the graces, and of a mutual understanding and good-humoured equality between the writer and the reader. This new style of composition, to use the phraseology of Mr. Burke,¹² “mitigated authors into companions, and compelled wisdom to submit to the soft collar of social esteem”. The original papers of the *Tatler*, printed on a half sheet of common foolscap, were regularly served up at breakfast-time with the silver tea-kettle and thin slices of bread and butter; and what the ingenious Mr. Bickerstaff¹³ wrote over night in his easy chair, he might flatter himself would be read the next morning with elegant applause by the fair, the witty, the learned, and the great, in all parts of this kingdom, in which civilization had made any considerable advances. The perfection of letters is when the highest ambition of the writer is to please his readers, and the greatest pride of the reader is to understand his author. The satisfaction on both sides ceases when the town becomes a club of authors, when each man stands with his manuscript in his hand waiting for his turn of applause, and when the claims on our admiration are so many that, like those of common beggars, to prevent imposition, they can only be answered with general neglect. Our self-love would be quite bankrupt, if critics by profession did not come forward as beadles to keep off the crowd, and to relieve us from the importunity of these innumerable candidates for fame, by pointing out their faults, and passing over their beauties.

In the more auspicious period just alluded to, an author was regarded by the better sort as a man of genius—and by the vulgar, as a kind of prodigy; insomuch that the Spectator was obliged to shorten his residence¹⁴ at his friend Sir Roger de Coverley's, from his being taken for a conjuror. Every state of society has its advantages and disadvantages. An author is at present in no danger of being taken for a conjuror!

NOTES

1. *Coke upon Littleton*, Sir Edward Coke, an eminent lawyer of the time of Francis Bacon, wrote a commentary upon the *Tenures* of Sir Thomas Littleton, who died in 1481.

2. *Parson Adams*, the simple-minded clergyman in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*.

3. *Scotch pedagogue*, in Smollett's *Roderick Random*.

4. *as others see us*, quoting from the last stanza of Robert Burns's poem *To a Louse*:

“ O wad some power the giftie gi'e us
To see oursels as ithers see us!”

There is a good deal of the unexpected in Hazlitt's viewpoint.

5. *character in Molière*, Molière, the French dramatist of the seventeenth century, ridicules doctors in several of his plays, particularly his *Le Médecin Malgre Lui* (1666).

6. *as a fluid*. Hazlitt recognizes the value of a good simile.

7. *Monsieur Jourdain and Monsieur Pourceaugnac*, the former is a character in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*; the latter in *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (1669).

8. *Frost's Fictions*, a collection of Unitarian authors by the brothers Poloni, published in nine volumes in 1656.

9. *Bayle*, a French philosopher of the seventeenth century, author of a voluminous historical and critical Dictionary.

10. *Voltaire*, a celebrated French dramatist and historian, and one of the greatest literary forces of the eighteenth century.

11. *Sir Isaac Newton*, who wrote his famous *Principia* in Latin (1687).

12. *Burke*, Edmund Burke, one of the most brilliant Irishmen of the latter half of the eighteenth century.

13. *Bickerstaff*, the name given to the pretended editor of the *Tatler*.

14. *shorten his residence*, as narrated in *Spectator* No. 131.

EXERCISES

1. Do you agree that 'Learning is the knowledge of that which is not generally known'?

2. Pick out some of Hazlitt's paradoxical statements.

3. Explain: 'Learning and pedantry were originally synonymous'.

4. Contrast Hazlitt's ideas about pedantry with Swift's.

5. Prove that Hazlitt is fuller of literary allusions than most of his predecessors.

6. What is meant by saying that his style has few blemishes and few mannerisms? Contrast it with Lamb's in this respect.

No. 10.—English Traits. Character

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born at Boston in Massachusetts, in the year 1803; but, like Thoreau, he spent most of his life at Concord. He is famous as philosopher, lecturer, and poet. His most widely known works are *Representative Men*, *English Traits*, *Conduct of Life*, and *Poems*. He was a friend of Carlyle, the Scottish thinker and writer.

His style, like that of all the earlier American writers, is entirely free from Americanisms. It is typically English, and contains all the features already referred to in the essays of his predecessors, such as balance and antithesis, occasional alliteration, and a fondness for figurative language and the use of words in pairs.

The English race are reputed morose. I do not know that they have sadder brows than their neighbours of northern climates. They are sad by comparison with the singing and dancing nations: not sadder, but slow and staid, as finding their joys at home. They, too, believe that where there is no enjoyment of life, there can be no vigour and art in speech or thought; that your merry heart ¹ goes all the way, your sad one tires in a mile. This trait of gloom has been fixed on them by French travellers, who, from Froissart, Voltaire, Le Sage, Mirabeau,² down to the lively journalists of the *feuilletons*,³ have spent their wit on the solemnity of their neighbours. The French

say, gay conversation is unknown in their island: the Englishman finds no relief from reflection except in reflection: when he wishes for amusement, he goes to work: his hilarity is like an attack of fever. Religion, the theatre, and the reading the books of his country, all feed and increase his natural melancholy. The police does not interfere with public diversions. It thinks itself bound in duty to respect the pleasures and rare gaiety of this inconsolable nation; and their well-known courage is entirely attributable to their disgust of life.

I suppose their gravity of demeanour and their few words have obtained this reputation. As compared with the Americans, I think them cheerful and contented. Young people, in this country, are much more prone to melancholy. The English have a mild aspect, and a ringing, cheerful voice. They are large-natured, and not so easily amused as the southerners, and are among them as grown people among children, requiring war, or trade, or engineering, or science, instead of frivolous games. They are proud and private, and, even if disposed to recreation, will avoid an open garden. They sported sadly; *ils s'amusaient tristement, selon la coutume de leur pays*,⁴ said Froissart; and, I suppose, never nation built their party walls so thick, or their garden fences so high. Meat and wine produce no effect on them: they are just as cold, quiet, and composed, at the end, as at the beginning of dinner.

The reputation of taciturnity they have enjoyed for six or seven hundred years; and a kind of pride in bad public speaking is noted in the House of Commons, as if they were willing to show that they did not live by their tongues, or thought they spoke well enough if they had

the tone of gentlemen. In mixed company, they shut their mouths. A Yorkshire mill-owner told me, he had ridden more than once all the way from Leeds, in the first-class carriage, with the same persons, and no word exchanged. The club-houses were established to cultivate social habits, and it is rare that more than two eat together, and oftenest one eats alone. Was it then a stroke of humour in the serious Swedenborg;⁵ or was it only his pitiless logic, that made him shut up the English souls in a heaven by themselves?

They are contradictorily described as sour, splenetic, and stubborn—and as mild, sweet, and sensible. The truth is, they have great range and variety of character. Commerce sends abroad multitudes of different classes. The choleric Welshman, the fervid Scot, the bilious resident in the East or West Indies, are wide of the perfect behaviour of the educated and dignified man of family. So is the burly farmer; so is the country squire, with his narrow and violent life. In every inn, is the Commercial Room, in which “travellers”, or bagmen, who carry patterns, and solicit orders, for the manufacturers, are wont to be entertained. It easily happens that this class should characterize England to the foreigner, who meets them on the road, and at every public house, whilst the gentry avoid the taverns, or seclude themselves whilst in them.

But these classes are the right English stock, and may fairly show the national qualities, before yet art and education have dealt with them. They are good lovers, good haters, slow but obstinate admirers, and, in all things, steeped in their temperament, like men hardly

awaked from deep sleep, which they enjoy. Their habits and instincts cleave to nature. They are of the earth, earthy; and of the sea, as the sea-kinds attached to it for what it yields them, and not from any sentiment. They are full of coarse strength, rude exercise, butcher's meat, and sound sleep; and suspect any poetic insinuation or any hint for the conduct of life which reflects on this animal existence, as if somebody were fumbling at the umbilical cord and might stop their supplies. They doubt a man's sound judgment if he does not eat with appetite, and shake their heads if he is particularly chaste. Take them as they come, you shall find in the common people a surly indifference, sometimes gruffness and ill-temper; and, in minds of more power, magazines of inexhaustible war challenging

The ruggedest hour that time and spite dare bring
To frown upon the enraged Northumberland.

They are headstrong believers and defenders of their opinions, and not less resolute in maintaining their whim and perversity. Hezekiah Woodward wrote a book against the Lord's Prayer. And one can believe that Burton,⁶ the Anacmism of Melancholy, having predicted from the stars the hour of his death, slipped the knot round his own neck, not to falsify his horoscope.

Their looks bespeak an invincible stoutness; they have extreme difficulty to run away, and will die game. Wellington said of the young coxcombs of the Life Guards delicately brought up, "But the puppies fight well"; and Nelson said of his sailors, "They really mind shot no more than peas". Of absolute stoutness no natica.

has more or better examples. They are good at storming redoubts, at boarding frigates, at dying in the last ditch, or any desperate service which has daylight and honour in it; but not, I think, at enduring the rack, or any passive obedience, like jumping off a castle-roof at the word of a czar. Being both vascular and highly organized, so as to be very sensible of pain; and intellectual, so as to see reason and glory in a matter.

Of that constitutional force, which yields the supplies of the day, they have more than enough, the excess which creates courage on fortitude, genius in poetry, invention in mechanics, enterprise in trade, magnificence in wealth, splendour in ceremonies, petulance and projects in youth. The young men have a rude health which runs into peccant humours. They drink brandy like water, cannot expend their quantities of waste strength on riding, hunting, swimming, and fencing, and run into absurd frolics with the gravity of the Eumenides.⁷ They stoutly carry into every nook and corner of the earth their turbulent sense; leaving no lie uncontradicted; no pretension unexamined. They chew hasheesh; cut themselves with poisoned creases;⁸ swing their hammock in the bough of the Bohon Upas; taste every poison; buy every secret; at Naples, they put St. Januarius's blood⁹ in an alembic; they saw a hole into the head of the "winking virgin", to know why she winks; measure with an English footrule every cell of the Inquisition, every Turkish caaba,¹⁰ every Holy of holies; translate and send to Bentley,¹¹ the arcanum bribed and bullied away from shuddering Brahmins; and measure their own strength by the terror they cause. These travellers are of every class; the best and the

worst; and it may easily happen that those of rudest behaviour are taken notice of and remembered. The Saxon melancholy in the vulgar rich and poor appears as gushes of ill-humour, which every check exasperates into sarcasm and vituperation. There are multitudes of rude young English who have the self-sufficiency and bluntness of their nation, and who, with their disdain of the rest of mankind, and with this indigestion and choler, have made the English traveller a proverb for uncomfortable and offensive manners. It was no bad description of the Briton generically, what was said two hundred years ago, of one particular Oxford scholar: "he was a very bold man, uttered anything that came into his mind, not only among his companions, but in public coffee-houses, and would often speak his mind of particular persons then accidentally present, without examining the company he was in; for which he was often reprimanded, and several times threatened to be kicked and beaten."

The common Englishman is prone to forget a cardinal article in the bill of social rights, that every man has a right to his own ears. No man can claim to usurp more than a few cubic feet of the audibilities of a public room, or to put upon the company with the loud statement of his crochets or personalities.

But it is in the deep traits of race that the fortunes of nations are written, and however derived, whether a happier tribe or mixture of tribes, the air, or whatever circumstance, that mixed for them the golden mean of temperament—here exists the best stock in the world, broad-fronted, broad-bottomed, best for depth, range, and equability, men of aplomb and reserves, great range

and many moods, strong instincts, yet apt for culture; war-class as well as clerks; earls and tradesmen; wise minority, as well as foolish majority; abysmal temperament, hiding wells of wrath, and glooms on which no sunshine settles; alternated with a commonsense and humanity which holds them fast to every piece of cheerful duty; making this temperament a sea to which all storms are superficial; a race to which their fortunes flow, as if they alone had the elastic organization at once fine and robust enough for dominion; as if the burly inexpressive, now mute and contumacious, now fierce and sharp-tongued dragon,¹² which once made the island light with his fiery breath, had bequeathed his ferocity to his conqueror. They hide virtues under vices, or the semblance of them. It is the misshapen Scandinavian troll¹³ again, who lifts the cart out of the mire, or "threshes the corn that ten day-labourers could not end", but it is done in the dark, and with muttered maledictions. He is a churl with a soft place in his heart, whose speech is a brash¹⁴ of bitter waters, but who loves to help you at a pinch. He says no, and serves you, and your thanks disgust him. Here was lately a cross-grained miser, odd and ugly, resembling in countenance the portrait of Punch, with the laugh left out; rich by his own industry; sulking in a lonely house; who never gave a dinner to any man, and disdained all courtesies; yet as true a worshipper of beauty in form and colour as ever existed, and profusely pouring over the cold mind of his countrymen creations of grace and truth, removing the reproach of sterility from English art, catching from their savage climate every fine hint, and importing into their galleries every tint and trait of

sunnier cities and skies; making an era in painting; and, when he saw that the splendour of one of his pictures in the Exhibition dimmed his rival's that hung next it, secretly took a brush and blackened his own.

They do not wear their heart in their sleeve for daws to peck at. They have that phlegm or staidness, which it is a compliment to disturb. "Great men," said Aristotle, "are always of a nature originally melancholy." 'Tis the habit of a mind which attaches to abstractions with a passion which gives vast results. They dare to displease, they do not speak to expectation. They like the sayers of No, better than the sayers of Yes. Each of them has an opinion which he feels it becomes him to express all the more that it differs from yours. They are meditating opposition. This gravity is inseparable from minds of great resources.

There is an English hero superior to the French, the German, the Italian, or the Greek. When he is brought to the strife with fate, he sacrifices a richer material possession, and on more purely metaphysical grounds. He is there with his own consent, face to face with fortune, which he defies. On deliberate choice and from grounds of character, he has elected his part to live and die for, and dies with grandeur. This race has added new elements to humanity, and has a deeper root in the world.

They have great range of scale, from ferocity to exquisite refinement. With larger scale, they have great retrieving power. After running each tendency to an extreme, they try another tack ¹⁵ with equal heat. More intellectual than other races, when they live with oth-

racés, they do not take their language, but bestow their own. They subsidize other nations, and are not subsidized. They proselyte, and are not proselyted. They assimilate other races to themselves, and are not assimilated. The English did not calculate the conquest of the Indies. It fell to their character. So they administer in different parts of the world, the codes of every empire and race; ¹⁶ in Canada, old French law; in the Mauritius, the Code Napoleon; in the West Indies, the edict of the Spanish Cortes; in the East Indies, the Laws of Menu; in the Isle of Man, of the Scandinavian Thing; at the Cape of Good Hope, of the old Netherlands; and in the Ionian Islands, the Pandects of Justinian.

They are very conscious of their advantageous position in history. England is the lawgiver, the patron, the instructor, the ally. Compare the tone of the French and the English press: the first querulous, captious, sensitive, about English opinion; the English press is never timorous about French opinion; but arrogant and contemptuous.

They are testy and headstrong through an excess of will and bias; churlish as men sometimes please to be who do not forget a debt, who ask no favours, and who will do what they like with their own. With education and intercourse these asperities wear off, and leave the good-will pure. If anatomy is reformed according to national tendencies, I suppose the spleen will hereafter be found in the Englishman, not found in the American, and differencing the one from the other. I anticipate another anatomical discovery, that this organ will be found to be cortical and caducous, that they are super-

ficially morose, but at last tender-hearted, herein differing from Rome and the Latin nations. Nothing savage, nothing mean resides in the English heart. They are subject to panics of credulity and of rage, but the temper of the nation, however disturbed, settles itself soon and easily, as, in this temperate zone, the sky after whatever storms clears again, and serenity is its normal condition.

A saving stupidity masks and protects their perception as the curtain of the eagle's eye. Our swifter Americans, when they first deal with English, pronounce them stupid; but, later, do them justice as people who wear well, or hide their strength. To understand the power of performance that is in their finest wits, in the patient Newton,¹⁷ or in the versatile transcendent poets, or in the Dugdales, Gibbons, Hallams, Eldons, and Peels, one should see how English day-labourers hold out. High and low, they are of an unctuous texture. There is an adipocere¹⁸ in their constitution, as if they had oil also for their mental wheels, and could perform vast amounts of work without damaging themselves.

Even the scale of expense on which people live, and to which scholars and professional men conform, proves the tension of their muscle, when vast numbers are found who can each lift this enormous load. I might even add, their daily feasts argue a savage rigour of body.

No nation was ever so rich in able men: "Gentlemen," as Charles I said of Strafford,¹⁹ "whose abilities might make a prince rather afraid than ashamed in the greatest affairs of state;" men of such temper, that, like Baron Vere, "had one seen him returning from a victory, he would by his silence have suspected that he had lost the

day; and, had he beheld him in a retreat, he would have collected him a conqueror by the cheerfulness of his spirit."

The following passage from the *Heimskringla* ²⁰ might almost stand for a portrait of the modern Englishman: "Haldor was very stout and strong, and remarkably handsome in appearances. King Harold gave him this testimony, that he, among all his men, cared least about doubtful circumstances, whether they betokened danger or pleasure; for, whatever turned up, he was never in higher nor in lower spirits, never slept less nor more on account of them, nor ate nor drank but according to his custom. Haldor was not a man of many words, but short in conversation, told his opinion bluntly, and was obstinate and hard; and this could not please the king, who had many clever people about him, zealous in his service. Haldor remained a short time with the king, and then came to Iceland, where he took up his abode in Hiardaholt, and dwelt in that farm to a very advanced age."

The national temper, in the civil history, is not flashy or whiffling. The slow, deep English mass smoulders with fire, which at last sets all its borders in flame. The wrath of London is not French wrath, but has a long memory, and in its hottest heat, a register and rule.

Half their strength they put not forth. They are capable of a sublime resolution, and if hereafter the war of races, often predicted, and making itself a war of opinions also (a question of despotism and liberty coming from Eastern Europe), should menace the English civilization, these sea-kings may take once again to their floating

castles, and find a new home and a second millennium of power in their colonies.

The stability of England is the security of 'the modern world. If the English race were as mutable as the French, what reliance? But the English stand for liberty. The, conservative, money-loving, lord-loving English are yet liberty-loving; and so freedom is safe: for they have more personal force than other people. The nation always resist the immoral action of their government. They think humanely on the affairs of France, of Turkey, of Poland, of Hungary, of Schleswig Holstein, though overborne by the statecraft of the rulers at last.

Does the early history of each tribe show the permanent bias, which, though not less potent, is masked, as the tribe spreads its activity into colonies, commerce, codes, arts, letters? The early history shows it, as the musician plays the air which he proceeds to conceal in a tempest of variations. In Alfred, in the Northmen, one may read the genius of the English society, namely, that private life is the place of honour. Glory, a career, and ambition, words familiar to the longitude of Paris, are seldom heard in English speech. Nelson wrote from their hearts their homely telegraph, "England expects every man to do his duty".

For actual service, for the dignity of a profession, or to appease diseased or inflamed talent, the army and navy may be entered (the worst boys doing well in the navy); and the civil service, in departments where serious official work is done; and they hold in esteem the barrister engaged in the severer studies of the law.

But the calm, sound, and most British Briton shrinks from public life, as charlatanism, and respects an economy founded on agriculture, coal-mines, manufactures, or trade, which secures an independence through the creation of real values.

They wish neither to command or obey, but to be kings in their own houses. They are intellectual, and deeply enjoy literature; they like well to have the world served up to them in books, maps, models, and every mode of exact information, and, though not creators in the art, they value its refinement. They are ready for leisure, can direct and fill their own day, nor need so much as others the constraint of a necessity. But the history of the nation discloses, at every turn, this original predilection for private independence, and, however this inclination may have been disturbed by the bribes with which their vast colonial power has warped men out of orbit, the inclination endures, and forms and reforms the laws, letters, manners, and occupations. They choose that welfare which is compatible with the commonwealth, knowing that such alone is stable; as wise merchants prefer investments in three per cents.

NOTES

1. *your merry heart*, a quotation from Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*.

2. Froissart (1338-1410), a contemporary with Chaucer, and a celebrated French historian. His *Chronicles* are a vivid, graphic, and faithful account of fourteenth-century life. As they deal in part with England, they are of the highest value for students of English social and political history.

Voltaire, born 1694, a famous French poet, dramatist, historical¹ and philosophical writer.

Le Sage, died 1747, the author of *Gil Blas*.

Mirabeau (1749-91), a famous French statesman of the Revolution movement.

3. *feuilletons*, literary and critical articles appearing in the French daily papers.

4. *ils s'amusaient . . .*, they amused themselves sadly, according to the custom of the country.

5. *Swedenborg*, born 1688, a Swedish scientist, mystic, and philosopher. He tried to lay the foundations of a new religion.

6. *Burton*, died 1640, author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*. His melancholy is not to be interpreted as depression of spirits, but rather as the habit of musing and ruminating in solitude.

7. *Eumenides* (Greek), the Furies. The word provides an example of euphemism, as it means 'the kindly ones'.

8. *creases*, or *kris*, a Malay dagger with a blade of a wavy form.

9. *St. Januarius's blood*. He is the patron saint of Naples. After his martyrdom two phials of his blood were preserved in the cathedral there. They are shown twice yearly, when the substance liquefies. This is the miracle.

10. *caaba*, the sacred edifice at Mecca containing the venerated black stone. It is the Holy of Holies of Islam.

11. *Bentley*, Richard Bentley (1794-1871), a well-known publisher of his day.

12. *dragon*. St. George was born in Cappadocia, but became the patron saint of England in the early middle ages. According to the accepted story he slew the dragon. The 23rd April is St. George's Day.

13. *Scandinavian troll*, originally giants, but more familiarly dwarfs or imps, supposed in Sweden and Denmark to inhabit subterranean caves.

14. *brash*, an eruption of a fluid.

15. *tack*, employing a nautical metaphor.

16. *codes of every empire*: *Canada* was in the hands of France before it became a British colony; *Mauritius*, an island in the

Indian Ocean, which belonged at one time to France; *Code Napoleon*, a celebrated code based largely on Roman law; *laws of Menu*, or Manu: The Laws of Manu are the first of the sacred books of the East, and they form the basis of Hindu law in the Indian courts; *Thing*, the Vikings had a settlement in the Isle of Man: a *thing* is their name for a legislative council, parliament, or court of law; *Cape of Good Hope*, settled by the Dutch; *Pandects*, the Emperor Justinian ordered that the law should be codified. The *Pandects* are a kind of Digest. Justinian was born in 482 and died in 565.

17. *Newton*, Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), the natural philosopher. His chief work is the *Principia*.

Dugdale (1605-86), antiquary. His chief work is the *Antiquities of Warwickshire*.

Gibbon (1737-94), the famous historian; his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is one of the world's great books.

Hallam (1777-1859) wrote the *Constitutional History of England*.

Eldon, Lord Eldon (1751-1838), Lord High Chancellor of England.

Peel, Sir Robert Peel (1788-1850), English statesman and Prime Minister.

18. *adipocere*, fatness.

19. *Strafford*, the Earl of Strafford (1593-1641), the chief adviser of King Charles I. The Long Parliament impeached him and he was executed. His ideas of government were dictatorial.

20. *Heimskringla*, the Lives of the Kings of Iceland. by Snorri (1179-1241).

EXERCISES

1. Sketch briefly Emerson's typical Englishman. In what respects are Sir Roger de Coverley and Sir Andrew Freeport typical?

2. Discuss the following statements:

(a) The English did not calculate the conquest of the Indies. It fell to their character.

(b) It is in the deep traits of race that the futures of nations are written.

(c) Private life is the place of honour.

3. How do you explain the complete absence of Americanisms from Emerson's work?

4. What has he to say about the English reputation for taciturnity?

5. Emerson writes with foresight and insight. In what respects do you think him a prophet?

6. Indicate some of the mannerisms of Emerson's style.

7. What evidences do you find of his wide reading?

8. Which English essayist does he resemble most?

No. 11.—An Orphaned Blackbird

WILLIAM HENRY HUDSON

William Henry Hudson was born at La Plata, South America, in 1841, and was educated privately there. His health wrecked by rheumatic fever, he came home to England in 1869 and lived quietly there, observing Nature and his fellow-men in different parts of the country and recording his impressions of them. Among his novels are *The Purple Land* (1885), *Green Mansions* (1904), *A Crystal Age* (1906). His sketches and studies of Nature include *British Birds* (1895), *Birds in London* (1898), *Birds and Man* (1909), and *A Shepherd's Life* (1910). In *Far away and Long Ago* (1918) he gives the story of his early life. He died in 1922.

The bad weather brought to our little plot of ground a young blackbird, who had evidently been thrown upon the world too early in life. A good number of blackbird broods had been brought off in the bushes about us, and in the rough and tumble of those tempestuous days some of the young had no doubt got scattered and lost; this at all events was one that had called and called to be fed and warmed and comforted in vain—we had heard him calling for days—and who had now grown prematurely silent, and had soberly set himself to find his own living as best he could. Between the lawn and the small sweetbriar hedge there was a strip of loose mould where roses had been planted, and here the bird had discovered that by turning over the dead leaves and

loose earth a few small morsels were to be found. During those cold, windy, wet days we observed him there diligently searching in his poor, slow little way. • He would strike his beak into the loose ground, making a little hop forward at the same time to give force to the stroke, and throw up about as much earth as would cover a shilling-piece; then he would gaze attentively at the spot, and after a couple of seconds hop and strike again; and, finally, if he could see nothing to eat, he would move on a few inches and begin again in another place. That was all his art—his one poor little way of getting a living; and it was plain to see from his bedraggled appearance and feeble motions, that he was going the way ¹ of most young orphaned birds.

Now, I hate playing at providence ² among the creatures, but we cannot be rid of pity; and there are exceptional cases in which one feels justified in putting out a helping hand. Nature herself is not always careless of the individual life: or perhaps it would be better to say with Thoreau,³ “We are not wholly involved in Nature”. And anxious to give the poor bird a chance by putting him in a sheltered place, and feeding him up, as Ruskin ⁴ once did in a like case, I set about catching him, but could not lay hands on him, for he was still able to fly a little, and always managed to escape pursuit among the brambles or else in the sedges by the waterside. Half an hour after being hunted, he would be back on the edge of the lawn prodding the ground in the old feeble, futile way. And the scraps of food I cunningly placed for him he disregarded, not knowing in his ignorance what was good for him. Then I got a supply of small

earthworms, and, stalking him, tossed them so as to cause them to fall near him, and he saw and knew what they were, and swallowed them hungrily; and he saw, too, that they were thrown to him by a hand, and that the hand was part of that same huge grey-clad monster that had a little while back so furiously hunted him, and at once he seemed to understand the meaning of it all, and instead of flying from he ran to meet us, and recovering his voice, called to be fed. The experience of one day made him a tame bird; on the second day he knew that bread and milk, stewed plums, pie-crust, and, in fact, anything we had to give, was good for him; and in the course of the next two or three days he acquired a useful knowledge of our habits.⁵ Thus, at half-past three in the morning he would begin calling to be fed at the bedroom window. If no notice was taken of him he would go away to try and find something for himself, and return at five o'clock when breakfast was in preparation, and place himself before the kitchen door. Usually he got a small snack then; and at the breakfast hour (six o'clock) he would turn up at the dining-room window and get a substantial meal. Dinner and teatime—twelve and half-past three o'clock—found him at the same spot; but he was often hungry between meals, and he would then sit before one door or window and call, then move to the next door, and so on until he had been all round the cottage. It was most amusing to see him when, on our return from a long walk or a day out,⁶ he would come to meet us, screaming excitedly, bounding over the lawn with long hops, looking like a miniature very dark-coloured kangaroo.

One day I came back alone to the cottage, and sat down on the lawn in a canvas chair, to wait for my companion who had the key. The blackbird had seen, and came flying to me, and pitching close to my feet, began crying to be fed, shaking his wings, and dancing about in a most excited state, for he had been left a good many hours without food, and was very hungry. As I moved not in my chair he presently ran round and began screaming and fluttering on the other side of it, thinking, I suppose, that he had gone to the wrong place, and that by addressing himself to the back of my head he would quickly get an answer.

The action of this bird in coming to be fed naturally attracted a good deal of attention among the feathered people about us; they would look on at a distance, evidently astonished and much puzzled at our bird's boldness in coming to our feet. But nothing dreadful happened to him, and little by little they began to lose their suspicion; and first a robin—the robin is always first—then other blackbirds to the number of seven, then chaffinches and dunnocks, all began to grow tame and to attend regularly at meal-time to have a share in anything that was going. The most lively, active, and quarrelsome member of this company was our now glossy ⁷ foundling; and it troubled us to think that in feeding him we were but staving off the evil day when he would once more have to fend for himself. Certainly we were teaching him nothing. But our fears were idle. The seven wild blackbirds that had formed a habit of coming to share his food were all young birds, and as time went on and the hedge fruit began to ripen, we noticed that they kept

more and more together. Whenever one was observed to fly straight away to some distance, in a few moments another would follow, then another, and presently it would be seen that they were all making their way to some spot in the valley, or to the woods on the other side. After several hours' absence they would all reappear on the lawn, or near it, at the same time, showing that they had been together throughout the day and had returned in company. After observing them in their comings and goings for several weeks I felt convinced that this species had in it the remains of a gregarious instinct which affects the young birds.

Our bird, as a member of this little company, must have quickly picked up from the others all that it was necessary for him to know, and at last it was plain to us from his behaviour at the cottage that he was doing very well for himself. He was often absent most of the day with the others, and on his return late in the afternoon he would pick over the good things placed for him in a leisurely way, selecting a morsel here and there, and eating more out of compliment to us, as it seemed, than because he was hungry. But up to the very last, when he had grown as hardy and strong on the wing as any of his wild companions, he kept up his acquaintance with and confidence in us; and even at night when I would go out to where most of our wild birds roosted, in the trees and bushes growing in a vast old chalk-pit close to the cottage, and called "Blackie", instantly there would be a response—a softly chuckled note, like a sleepy "Good night", thrown back to me out of the darkness.

NOTES

1. *going the way of*, i.e. he would not live long.
2. *playing at providence*, trying to take the place and do the work of God the Creator.
3. *Thoreau*, Henry David Thoreau, an American naturalist, born at Concord, Massachusetts, in 1817, and died there in 1862. He was a friend of Emerson. In *Walden* (1854) and his other books he preaches "back to nature". He loved everything in the physical world about him. There is a good essay on Thoreau by K. L. Stevenson which may be read.
4. *Ruskin*, John Ruskin (1819-1900), a great English writer on social and æsthetic subjects. *Sesame and Lilies* is one of his most characteristic works.
5. *knowledge of our habits*, an example of the author's quiet humour. The joke, as the Americans say, is on him and the members of his family thus awakened at an untimely hour.
6. *a day out*, when we had been absent for the whole day on some visit, excursion, or picnic.
7. *glossy*, because the young bird was now well-fed and in perfect health and condition.

EXERCISES

1. Write a note on Nature Study. Which of the essayists study Nature for itself, and not as a background for human actions?
2. 'Simple language for a simple subject.' Discuss.
3. Investigate some of the writer's mannerisms, e.g. his love of adjectives and figures, and compare his style with that of any of your other essayists.
4. 'We are not wholly involved in Nature.' Explain and discuss.
5. What particular qualities in the writer does this essay reveal?
6. How far is this essay 'reflective'? Compare it with No. 20.

No. 12.—Pulvis et Umbra

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh in 1850 and studied law at Edinburgh University. His earlier writings include *A Lodging for the Night*, *An Inland Voyage*, *Travels with a Donkey*, and in 1881 a collection of his essays appeared under the title of *Virginibus Puerisque*. The same year saw *Treasure Island*. In 1886 *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was published, to be followed by *Kidnapped*, *The Master of Ballantrae*, *Catriona*, and the unfinished *Weir of Hermiston*. He wrote verse also, and *A Child's Garden of Verses* contains some of his most characteristic poetry. He died in 1894.

Stevenson's work reveals his own charming personality. He never lost his boyishness, and he delighted in weaving fancies and making up stories to satisfy his 'much-inventing spirit'. He delighted in the simple open-air life and the beauties of nature. Himself an artist, his writings are full of descriptions of the colours of nature. He celebrates in both prose and verse his joy in 'the broad road that stretches and the roadside fire'; and reveals everywhere his easy camaraderie and healthy optimism.

Widely read in literature, his writings betray his catholic taste. The influence of the books of his childhood, the Bible and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, on his style is easily traceable. But he studied closely the whole art of expression; and by steady practice and constant dissatisfaction with his efforts he made himself one of the greatest writers of English. Few writers have found more frequently than Stevenson the 'inevitable' word.

The essay *Pulvis et Umbra* is sombre, serious, and stark.

Yet it is Stevenson's declaration of belief, his assertion of the innate good in humanity. Some have called it 'a Darwinian sermon', others 'a glorious paradox'; in it, they say, 'the lights are turned a little low'; but every sentence reveals Stevenson's optimism and undaunted spirit.

We look for some reward of our endeavours and are disappointed; not success, not happiness, not even peace of conscience, crowns our ineffectual efforts to do well. Our frailties are invincible, our virtues barren; the battle goes sore against us to the going down of the sun.¹ The canting moralist tells us of right and wrong, and we look abroad, even on the face of our small earth, and find them change with every climate, and no country where some action is not honoured for a virtue and none where it is not branded for a vice; and we look in our experience, and find no vital congruity in the wisest rules, but, at the best a municipal fitness.² It is not strange if we are tempted to despair of good. We ask too much. Our religions and moralities have been trimmed to flatter us, till they are all emasculate and sentimentalized, and only please and weaken. Truth is of a rougher strain. In the harsh face of life, faith can read a bracing gospel. The human race is a thing more ancient than the ten commandments; and the bones and revolution of the Kosmos, in whose joints we are but moss and fungus, more ancient still.

I

Of the Kosmos in the last resort, science reports many doubtful things, and all of them appalling. There seem:

no substance to this solid globe on which we stamp: nothing but symbols and ratios. Symbols and ratios carry us and bring us forth and beat us down; gravity that swings the incommensurable suns and worlds through space, is but a figment varying inversely as the squares of distances; and the suns and worlds themselves, imponderable figures of abstraction, NH_3 and H_2O .³ Consideration dares not dwell upon this view; that way madness lies; science carries us into zones of speculation, where there is no habitable city for the mind of man.

But take the Kosmos with a grosser faith, as our senses give it us. We behold space sown with rotatory islands, suns and worlds and the shards⁴ and wrecks of systems: some, like the sun, still blazing; some rotting, like the earth; others, like the moon, stable in desolation. All of these we take to be made of something we call matter: a thing which no analysis can help us to conceive; to whose incredible properties no familiarity can reconcile our minds. This stuff, when not purified by the lustration of fire, rots uncleanly into something we call life; seized through all its atoms with a pediculous⁵ malady; swelling in tumours that become independent, sometimes even (by an abhorrent prodigy) locomotory; one splitting into millions, millions cohering into one, as the malady proceeds through varying stages. This vital putrescence of the dust, used as we are to it, yet strikes us with occasional disgust, and the profusion of worms in a piece of ancient turf, or the air of a marsh darkened with insects, will sometimes check our breathing so that we aspire for cleaner places. But none is clean: the moving sand is infected with lice; the pure spring, where it

bursts out of the mountain, is a mere issue of worms; even in the hard rock the crystal is forming.

In two main shapes this eruption covers the countenance of the earth: the animal and the vegetable: one in some degree the inversion of the other: the second rooted to the spot; the first coming detached out of its natal mud, and scurrying abroad with the myriad feet of insects or towering into the heavens on the wings of birds: a thing so inconceivable that, if it be well considered, the heart stops. To what passes with the anchored vermin, we have little clue: doubtless they have their joys and sorrows, their delights and killing agonies: it appears not how. But of the locomotory, to which we ourselves belong, we can tell more. These share with us a thousand miracles: the miracles of sight, of hearing, of the projection of sound, things that bridge space; the miracles of memory and reason, by which the present is conceived, and when it is gone its image kept living in the brains of man and brute; the miracle of reproduction, with its imperious desire and staggering consequences. And to put the last touch upon this mountain mass of the revolting and the inconceivable, all these prey upon each other, lives tearing other lives in pieces, cramming them inside themselves, and by that summary process, growing fat: the vegetarian, the whale, perhaps the tree, not less than the lion of the desert; for the vegetarian is only the eater of the dumb.

Meanwhile our rotatory island loaded with predatory life, and more drenched with blood, both animal and vegetable, than ever mutinied ship, scuds through space with unimaginable speed, and turns alternate checks to

the reverberation of a blazing world, ninety million miles away.

II

What a monstrous spectre is this man, the disease of the agglutinated dust, lifting alternate feet or lying drugged with slumber; killing, feeding, growing, bringing forth small copies of himself; grown upon with hair-like grass, fitted with eyes that move and glitter in his face; a thing to set children screaming;—and yet looked at nearer, known as his fellows know him, how surprising are his attributes! Poor soul, here for so little, cast among so many hardships, filled with desires so incommensurate and so inconsistent, savagely surrounded, savagely descended, irremediably condemned to prey upon his fellow lives: who should have blamed him had he been of a piece with his destiny and a being merely barbarous? And we look and behold him instead filled with imperfect virtues: infinitely childish, often admirably valiant, often touchingly kind; sitting down, amidst his momentary life, to debate of right and wrong and the attributes of the deity; rising up to do battle for an egg⁶ or die for an idea; singling out his friends and his mate with cordial affection; bringing forth in pain, rearing with long-suffering solicitude, his young. To touch the heart of his mystery, we find in him one thought, strange to the point of lunacy: the thought of duty, the thought of something owing to himself, to his neighbour, to his God: an ideal of decency, to which he would rise if it were possible; a limit of shame, below which, if it be possible, he will not stoop. The design in most men is

one of conformity; here and there, in picked natures, it transcends itself and soars on the other side, arming martyrs with independence; but in all, in their degrees, it is a bosom thought:—Not in man alone, for we trace it in dogs and cats whom we know fairly well, and doubtless some similar point of honour sways the elephant, the oyster, and the louse, of whom we know so little:—But in man, at least, it sways with so complete an empire that merely selfish things come second, even with the selfish: that appetites are starved, fears are conquered, pains supported; that almost the dullest shrinks from the reproof of a glance, although it were a child's; and all but the most cowardly stand amid the risks of war; and the more noble, having strongly conceived an act as due to their ideal, affront⁷ and embrace death. Strange enough if, with their singular origin and perverted practice, they think they are to be rewarded in some future life: stranger still, if they are persuaded of the contrary, and think this blow, which they solicit, will strike them senseless for eternity. I shall be reminded what a tragedy of misconception and misconduct man at large presents: of organized injustice, cowardly violence and treacherous crime; and of the damning imperfections of the best. They cannot be too darkly drawn. Man is indeed marked for failure in his efforts to do right. But where the best consistently miscarry, how tenfold more remarkable that all should continue to strive; and surely we should find it both touching and inspiring, that in a field from which success is banished, our race should not cease to labour.

If the first view of this creature, stalking in his rotatory

isle, be a thing to shake the courage of the stoutest, on this nearer sight, he startles us with an admiring wonder. It matters not where we look, under what climate we observe him, in what stage of society, in what depth of ignorance, burthened with what erroneous morality; by camp-fires in Assiniboia,⁸ the snow powdering his shoulders, the wind plucking his blanket, as he sits, passing the ceremonial calumet and uttering his grave opinions like a Roman senator; in ships at sea, a man inured to hardships and vile pleasures, his brightest hope a fiddle in a tavern and a bedizened⁹ trull who sells herself to rob him, and he for all that simple, innocent, cheerful, kindly like a child, constant to toil, brave to drown, for others; in the slums of cities, moving among indifferent millions to mechanical employments, without hope of change in the future, with scarce a pleasure in the present, and yet true to his virtues, honest up to his lights, kind to his neighbours, tempted perhaps in vain by the bright gin-palace, perhaps long-suffering with the drunken wife that ruins him; in the brothel, the discard of society, living mainly on strong drink, fed with affronts, a fool, a thief, the comrade of thieves, and even here keeping the point of honour and the touch of pity, often repaying the world's scorn with service, often standing firm upon a scruple, and at a certain cost, rejecting riches: everywhere some virtue cherished or affected, everywhere some decency of thought and carriage, everywhere the ensign of man's ineffectual goodness:—ah! if I could show you this! if I could show you these men and women, all the world over, in every stage of history, under every abuse of error, under every circumstance of failure, without

hope, without help, without thanks, still obscurely fighting the lost fight of virtue, still clinging, in the brothel or on the scaffold, to some rag of honour, the poor jewel of their souls! They may seek to escape, and yet they cannot; it is not alone their privilege and glory, but their doom; they are condemned to some nobility; and their lives long, the desire of good is at their heels, the implacable hunter.

Of all earth's meteors, here at least is the most strange and consoling: that this ennobled lemur,¹⁰ this hair-crowned bubble of the dust, this inheritor of a few years and sorrows, should yet deny himself his rare delights, and add to his frequent pains, and live for an ideal, however misconceived. Nor can we stop with man. A new doctrine,¹¹ received with screams a little while ago by canting moralists, and still not properly worked into the body of our thoughts, lights us a step farther into the heart of this rough but noble universe. For nowadays the pride of man denies in vain his kinship with the original dust. He stands no longer like a thing apart. Close at his heels we see the dog, prince of another genus: and in him too, we see dumbly testified the same cultus¹² of an unattainable ideal, the same constancy in failure. Does it stop with the dog? We look at our feet where the ground is blackened with the swarming ant: a creature so small, so far from us in the hierarchy of brutes, that we can scarce trace and scarce comprehend his doings; and here also, in his ordered politics and rigorous justice, we see confessed the law of duty and the fact of individual sin. Does it stop, then, with the ant? Rather this desire of well-doing and this doom of frailty run through all the

grades of life: rather is this earth, from the frosty top of Everest to the next ¹³ margin of the internal fire, one stage of ineffectual virtues and one temple of pious tears and perseverance. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth¹⁴ together. It is the common and the god-like law of life. The browsers, the biters, the barkers, the hairy coats of field and forest, the squirrel in the oak, the thousand-footed creeper in the dust, as they share with us the gift of life, share with us the love of an ideal: strive like us—like us are tempted to grow weary of the struggle—to do well; like us receive at times unmerited refreshment, visitings of support, returns of courage; and are condemned like us to be crucified between that double law of the members and the will. Are they like us, I wonder, in the timid hope of some reward, some sugar with the drug? do they, too, stand aghast at unrewarded virtues, at the sufferings of those whom, in our partiality, we take to be just, and the prosperity of such as, in our blindness, we call wicked? It may be, and yet God knows what they should look for. Even while they look, even while they repent, the foot of man treads them by thousands in the dust, the yelping hounds burst upon their trail, the bullet speeds, the knives are heating in the den of the vivisectionist; or the dew falls, and the generation of a day ¹⁵ is blotted out. For these are creatures, compared with whom our weakness is strength, our ignorance wisdom, our brief span eternity.

And as we dwell, we living things, in our isle of terror, and under the imminent hand of death, God forbid it should be man the erected,¹⁶ the reasoner, the wise in his own eyes—God forbid it should be man that wearies in

well-doing, that despairs of unrewarded effort, or utters the language of complaint. Let it be enough for faith, that the whole creation groans in mortal frailty, strives with unconquerable constancy: Surely not all in vain.

NOTES

The title *Pulvis et Umbra* is Latin, meaning 'Dust and Shadow', and is taken from one of the Odes of the famous Roman poet, Horace.

1. *going down of the sun*, a reminiscence of the language of the Bible, found frequently in many English writers.

2. *a municipal fitness*. Stevenson finds the 'inevitable' word more often than most writers.

3. *NH₃ and H₂O*, sodium and water.

4. *shards*, fragments of broken pottery.

5. *pediculous*, lousy, a rather stark expression skilfully camouflaged.

6. *battle for an egg*, undoubtedly a reminiscence of *Hamlet*, iv. 4, 51:

Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell.

7. *affront*, face courageously.

8. *Assiniboia*, the picture is of the Red Indians of North America.

calumet, the pipe of peace.

9. *bedizened*, gaudily dressed up.

10. *lemur*, a genus of nocturnal mammals allied to the monkey.

11. *a new doctrine*, the Darwinian theory.

12. *cultus*, cult, worship.

13. *next*, nearest.

14. *travaileth*, labours; another reminiscence of Biblical language. See Romans, viii. 22.

15. *the generation of a day*, the small insects whose life lasts for a day.

15. *erected*, standing upright.

EXERCISES

1. "In *Pulvis et Umbra* the lights are turned a little low," as Stevenson says. Explain what he means, and show, if you can, in what respects this essay differs from his others.

2. Prove that the essay reveals Stevenson's undaunted spirit and his optimism.

3. Give some examples of Stevenson's use of the 'inevitable' word.

4. Explain the phrase: 'a Darwinian sermon'.

5. Show why this essay is a glorious paradox.

6. Define briefly Stevenson's philosophy of life.

7. Sketch, following Stevenson, the sailor and the working-class toiler in the slums.

8. What mannerisms have you found in Stevenson's style?

No. 13.—The Office of Literature

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

The Right Honourable Augustine Birrell, K.C., was born near Liverpool in 1850, the same year as Stevenson. He was educated at Cambridge, and became a Member of Parliament in 1889. From 1896 to 1899 he was Professor of Law at University College, London; he became President of the Board of Education in 1905, and Chief Secretary for Ireland from 1907 to 1916. Among his works are *Obiter Dicta*, 1884; *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 1885; *Collected Essays*, 1900; *Hazlitt*, 1902; *Marvell*, 1905, &c. Birrell was always interested in the concrete; for him the book is never wholly separated from its writer. He wrote on literary things out of love; he loves to wander in familiar pastures; and so he is able to impart to all of us something of the joy in books. As a critic he is outspoken, and a staunch champion of his favourite authors.

His style is rather rhetorical, and frequently colloquial. He is inclined to be figurative, and he has numerous allusions to literary figures. The moral which he preaches is a pleasant one: that literature exists to please, that its purpose is "to soothe the sorrows of the soothers of sorrow".

Dr. John Brown's¹ pleasant story has become well known, of the countryman who, being asked to account for the gravity of his dog, replied, "Oh, sir, life is full of seriousness to him—he can just never get enough o' fechtin'". Something of the spirit of this saddened dog seems lately to have entered into the very people who

ought to be freest from it—our men of letters. They are all very serious and very quarrelsome. To some of them it is dangerous even to allude. Many are wedded² to a theory or period, and are the most uxorious of husbands—ever ready to resent an affront to their lady. This devotion makes them very grave, and possibly very happy after a pedantic fashion. One remembers what Hazlitt, who was neither happy nor pedantic, has said³ about pedantry:

“The power of attaching an interest to the most trifling or painful pursuits is one of the greatest happinesses of our nature. The common soldier mounts the breach with joy, the miser deliberately starves himself to death, the mathematician sets about extracting the cube-root with a feeling of enthusiasm, and the lawyer sheds tears of delight over *Coke upon Littleton*. He who is not in some measure a pedant, though he may be a wise, cannot be a very happy, man.”

Possibly not; but then we are surely not content that our authors should be pedants in order that they may be happy and devoted. As one of the great class for whose sole use and behalf literature exists—the class of readers—I protest that it is to me a matter of indifference whether an author is happy or not. I want him to make me happy. That is his office. Let him discharge it.

I recognize in this connection the corresponding truth of what Sydney Smith⁴ makes his Peter Plymley say about the private virtues of Mr. Perceval, the Prime Minister:⁵

“You spend a great deal of ink about the character of the present Prime Minister. Grant all that you write—I say, I fear that he will ruin Ireland, and pursue a line of

policy destructive to the true interests of his country; and then you tell me that he is faithful to Mrs. Perceval, and kind to the Master Percevals. I should prefer that he whipped his boys and saved his country."

We should never confuse functions or apply wrong tests. What can books do for us? Dr. Johnson, the least pedantic of men, put the whole matter into a nutshell (a cocoa-nut shell, if you will—Heaven forbid that I should seek to compress the great Doctor within any narrower limits than my metaphor requires!), when he wrote that a book should teach us either to enjoy life or endure it. "Give us enjoyment!" "Teach us endurance!" Harken to the ceaseless demand and the perpetual prayer of an ever unsatisfied and always suffering humanity!

How is a book to answer the ceaseless demand?

Self-forgetfulness is of the essence of enjoyment, and the author who would confer pleasure must possess the art, or know the trick, of destroying for the time the reader's own personality. Undoubtedly the easiest way of doing this is by the creation of a host of rival personalities—hence the number and the popularity of novels. Whenever a novelist fails, his book is said to flag; that is, the reader suddenly (as in skating) comes bump down upon his own personality, and curses the unskilful author. No lack of characters and continual motion is the easiest recipe for a novel, which, like a beggar, should always be kept "moving on". Nobody knew this better than Fielding,⁶ whose novels, like most good ones, are full of inns.

When those who are addicted to what is called "improving reading" inquire of you petulantly why you

cannot find change of company and scene in books of travel, you should answer cautiously that when books of travel are full of inns, atmosphere and motion, they are as good as any novel; nor is there any reason in the nature of things why they should not always be so, though experience proves the contrary.

The truth or falsehood of a book is immaterial. George Borrow's ⁷ *Bible in Spain* is, I suppose, true; though now that I come to think of it, in what is to me a new light, one remembers that it contains some odd things. But was not Borrow the accredited agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society? Did he not travel (and he had a free hand) at their charges? Was he not befriended by our minister at Madrid, Mr. Villiers, subsequently Earl of Clarendon in the peerage of England? It must be true; and yet at this moment I would as lief read a chapter of *The Bible in Spain* as I would *Gil Blas*; ⁸ nay, I positively would give the preference to Senor Giorgio.⁹

Nobody can sit down to read Borrow's books without as completely forgetting himself as if he were a boy in the forest with Gurth and Wamba.¹⁰

Borrow is provoking and has his full share of faults, and, though the owner of a style, is capable of excruciating offences. His habitual use of the odious word "individual" as a noun-substantive (seven times in three pages of *The Romany Rye*) elicits the frequent groan, and he is certainly once guilty of calling fish the "finny tribe". He believed himself to be animated by an intense hatred of the Church of Rome, and disfigures many of his pages by Lawrence-Boythorn-like tirades ¹¹ against that institution; but no Catholic of sense need on this account deny

himself the pleasure of reading Borrow, whose one dominating passion was *camaraderie*, and who hob-a-nobbed in the friendliest spirit with priest and gipsy in a fashion as far beyond praise as it is beyond description by any pen other than his own. Hail to thee, George Borrow! Cervantes¹² himself, Gil Blas, do not more effectually carry their readers into the land of the Cid¹³ than does this miraculous agent of the Bible Society, by favour of whose pleasantness we can, any hour of the week, enter Villafranca¹⁴ by night, or ride into Galicia on an Andalusian stallion (which proved to be a foolish thing to do), without costing anybody a *peseta*,¹⁵ and at no risk whatever to our necks—be they long or short.

Cooks, warriors, and authors must be judged by the effects they produce: toothsome dishes, glorious victories, pleasant books—these are our demands. We have nothing to do with ingredients, tactics or methods. We have no desire to be admitted into the kitchen, the council or the study. The cook may clean her saucepans how she pleases—the warrior place his men as he likes—the author handle his material or weave his plot as best he can—when the dish is served we only ask, Is it good? when the battle has been fought, Who won? when the book comes out, Does it read?

Authors ought not to be above being reminded that it is their first duty to write agreeably—some very disagreeable men have succeeded in doing so, and there is therefore no need for anyone to despair. Every author, be he grave or gay, should try to make his book as ingratiating as possible. Reading is not a duty, and has consequently no business to be made disagreeable.

Nobody is under any obligation to read any other man's book.

Literature exists to please—to lighten the burden of men's lives; to make them for a short while forget their sorrows and their sins, their silenced hearths, their disappointed hopes, their grim futures—and those men of letters are the best loved who have best performed literature's truest office. Their name is happily legion, and I will conclude these disjointed remarks by quoting from one of them, as honest a parson as ever took tithe or voted for the Tory candidate, the Rev. George Crabbe.¹⁶ Hear him in "The Frank Courtship":

"I must be loved," said Sybil; "I must see
The man in terrors, who aspires to me:
At my forbidding frown his heart must ache,
His tongue must falter, and his frame must shake;
And if I grant him at my feet to kneel,
What trembling fearful pleasure must he feel:
Nay, such the rapture that my smiles inspire
That reason's self must for a time retire."
"Alas! for good Josiah," said the dame,
"These wicked thoughts would fill his soul with shame;
He kneel and tremble at a thing of dust!
He cannot, child:"—the child replied, "He must."

Were an office to be opened for the insurance of literary reputations, no critic at all likely to be in the society's service would refuse the life of a poet who could write like Crabbe. Cardinal Newman,¹⁷ Mr. Leslie Stephen, Mr. Swinburne, are not always of the same way of thinking, but all three hold the one true faith about Crabbe.

But even were Crabbe now left unread, which is very far from being the case, his would be an enviable fame—

for was he not one of the favourite poets of Walter Scott, and whenever the closing scene of the great magician's life is read in the pages of Lockhart,¹⁸ must not Crabbe's name be brought upon the reader's quivering lip?

To soothe the sorrow of the soothers of sorrow, to bring tears to the eyes and smiles to the cheeks of the lords of human smiles and tears, is no mean ministry, and it is Crabbe's.

NOTES

1. *Dr. John Brown* (1810-82), a Scottish physician who practised in Edinburgh and wrote the delightful *Horæ Subsecivæ*, *Rab and His Friends*, and *Marjorie Fleming*. He is full of humour and tenderness, and shows a particular fondness for dogs.

2. *wedded*, note the expressive metaphor.

3. *Hazlitt . . . has said*, in No. 9.

4. *Sydney Smith* (1771-1845), writer and reviewer with a vein of humour.

5. *Mr. Perceval, the Prime Minister* (1762-1812), who was Prime Minister of England when he was shot by the madman Bellingham.

6. *Fielding* (1707-54), the great English novelist, his best work being *Tom Jones*.

7. *George Borrow* (1803-81), traveller, writer and philologist. His chief works are *The Bible in Spain*, *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*.

8. *Gil Blas*, by the French writer Le Sage (1668-1747), a masterpiece of romantic writing. He has the mirth of Homer and Shakespeare.

9. *Giorgio*, the Spanish form of George.

10. *Gurth and Wamba*, two well-known characters in Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

11. *Lawrence-Boythorn-like tirades*. Lawrence Boythorn is a character in Dickens's novel *Bleak House*. He was "always in extremes; perpetually in the superlative degree". The original of this character was the poet Walter Savage Landor.

12. *Cervantes* (1547-1616), who died in the same year as Shakespeare, the famous Spanish author of *Don Quixote*.

13. *land of the Cid*, i.e. Spain.

14. *Villafranca*, a town in *Galicia*, the north-west province of Spain. *Andalusia* is a province in the south and south-east.

15. *peseta*, a small Spanish coin.

16. *George Crabbe* (1754-1832), English poet of simple country life. His best-known work is *The Village* (1782).

17. *Cardinal Newman*, John Henry Newman (1801-90), a religious writer and controversialist, who rose to be a Cardinal in the Church of Rome. He wrote some beautiful poems, including the *Dream of Gerontius*. His prose style is very fresh and vigorous, as may be seen in his *Idea of a University*.

Leslie Stephen (1832-1904), biographer and literary critic. He was a close friend of Stevenson. His best-known work is *Hours in a Library*.

Mr. Swinburne (1837-1909), a famous poet of the later Victorian era. *Atalanta in Calydon* is perhaps his most characteristic work.

18. *Lockhart* (1794-1854), Sir Walter Scott's son-in-law and biographer.

EXERCISES

1. Reconcile Birrell's views on *pedantry* with Hazlitt's.
2. Write an essay on: Self-forgetfulness is of the essence of enjoyment.
3. Illustrate Birrell's love of literature.
4. Investigate the paradox that "the truth or falsehood of a book is immaterial".
5. Do you agree that Literature exists to please?
6. Bring out the chief qualities of Birrell's style.

No. 14.—Rulers of East and West

JOSEPH CONRAD

Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) was not an Englishman, but a Pole, born in Central Europe. In his youth he conceived a passion for the sea, and ultimately became a master in the British Mercantile Marine. His stories are drawn mostly from his sea experiences, and he interprets with rare mastery the islands of the remote East, the tropical lands and seas, and the men and women who inhabit them. Unmatched as a descriptive writer, some of his chief works are: *Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands*, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, *Tales of Unrest*, *Lord Jim*, *Youth*, *Typhoon*, *Nostromo*, *The Mirror of the Sea*, *The Arrow of Gold*, *Rescue*.

Emerson, although not an Englishman, wrote the same prose as Hazlitt and Stevenson; but Conrad's style has a foreign richness. One remarks first of all his wealth of vocabulary. Equally striking in this essay is his love of figurative language, of long-continuing metaphors. His sentences are full of nautical phrases; he is colourful, and he delights in well-chosen adjectives. Picturesque and vivid, he is one of the most wonderful writers of English.

There is no part of the world of coasts, continents, oceans, seas, straits, capes, and islands which is not under the sway of a reigning wind, the sovereign of its typical weather. The wind rules the aspects of the sky and the action of the sea. But no wind rules unchallenged his realm of land and water. As with the kingdoms of the earth,

there are regions more turbulent than others. In the middle belt of the earth the Trade Winds reign supreme, undisputed, like monarchs¹ of long-settled kingdoms, whose traditional power, checking all undue ambitions, is not so much an exercise of personal might as the working of long-established institutions. The intertropical kingdoms of the Trade Winds are favourable to the ordinary life of a merchant-man. The trumpet-call of strife is seldom borne on their wings to the watchful ears of men on the decks of ships. The regions ruled by the north-east and south-east Trade Winds are serene. In a southern-going ship, bound out for a long voyage, the passage through their dominions is characterized by a relaxation of strain and vigilance on the part of the seamen. Those citizens of the ocean feel sheltered under the ægis² of an uncontested law, of an undisputed dynasty. There, indeed, if anywhere on earth, the weather may be trusted.

Yet not too implicitly. Even in the constitutional realm of Trade Winds, north and south of the Equator, ships are overtaken by strange disturbances. Still, the easterly winds, and, generally speaking, the easterly weather all the world over, is characterized by regularity and persistence.

As a ruler, the East Wind has a remarkable stability; as an invader of the high latitudes³ lying under the tumultuous sway of his great brother, the Wind of the West, he is extremely difficult to dislodge, by the reason of his cold craftiness and profound duplicity.

The narrow seas around these isles, where British admirals keep watch and ward upon the marches of the

Atlantic Ocean, are subject to the turbulent sway of the West Wind. Call it north-west or south-west, it is all one—a different phase of the same character, a changed expression on the same face. In the orientation of the winds that rule the seas, the north and south directions are of no importance. There are no North and South Winds of any account upon this earth. The North and South Winds are but small princes in the dynasties that make peace and war upon the sea. They never assert themselves upon a vast stage. They depend upon local causes—the configuration of coasts, the shapes of straits, the accidents of bold promontories round which they play their little part. In the polity of winds, as amongst the tribes of the earth, the real struggle lies between East and West.

The West Wind reigns over the seas surrounding the coasts of these kingdoms; and from the gateways of the channels, from promontories as if from watch-towers, from estuaries of rivers as if from postern gates, from passage-ways, inlets, straits, firths, the garrison⁴ of the Isle and the crews of the ships going and returning look to the westward to judge by the varied splendours of his sunset mantle the mood of that arbitrary ruler. The end of the day is the time to gaze at the kingly face of the Westerly Weather, who is the arbiter of ships' destinies. Benignant and splendid, or splendid and sinister, the western sky reflects the hidden purposes of the royal mind. Clothed in a mantle of dazzling gold or draped in rags of black clouds like a beggar, the might of the Westerly Wind sits enthroned upon the western horizon with the whole North Atlantic as a footstool for his foot and

the first twinkling stars making a diadem for his brow. Then the seamen, attentive courtiers of the weather, think of regulating the conduct of their ships by the mood of the master. The West Wind is too great a king to be a dissembler: he is no calculator plotting deep schemes in a sombre heart; he is too strong for small artifices; there is passion in all his moods, even in the soft mood of his serene days, in the grace of his blue sky whose immense and unfathomable tenderness reflected in the mirror of the sea embraces, possesses, lulls to sleep the ships with white sails. He is all things to all oceans; he is like a poet seated upon a throne—magnificent, simple, barbarous, pensive, generous, impulsive, changeable, fathomless⁵—but when you understand him, always the same. Some of his sunsets are like pageants devised for the delight of the multitude, when all the gems of the royal treasure-house are displayed above the sea. Others are like the openings of his royal confidence, tinged with thoughts of sadness and compassion in a melancholy splendour meditating upon the short-lived peace of the waters. And I have seen him put the pent-up anger of his heart into the aspect of the inaccessible sun, and cause it to glare fiercely like the eye of an implacable autocrat out of a pale and frightened sky.

He is the war-lord who sends his battalions of Atlantic rollers to the assault of our seaboard.⁶ The compelling voice of the West Wind musters up to his service all the might of the ocean. At the bidding of the West Wind there arises a great commotion in the sky above these Islands, and a great rush of waters falls upon our shores. The sky of the westerly weather is full of flying clouds,

of great big white clouds coming thicker and thicker till they seem to stand welded into a solid canopy, upon whose grey face the lower wrack of the gale, thin, black, and angry-looking, flies past with vertiginous speed. Denser and denser grows this dome of vapours, descending lower and lower upon the sea, narrowing the horizon around the ship. And the characteristic aspect of westerly weather, the thick, grey, smoky, and sinister tone sets in, circumscribing the view of the men, drenching their bodies, oppressing their souls, taking their breath away with booming gusts, deafening, blinding, driving, rushing them onwards in a swaying ship towards our coasts lost in mists and rain.

The caprice of the winds, like the wilfulness of men, is fraught with the disastrous consequences of self-indulgence. Long anger, the sense of his uncontrolled power, spoils the frank and generous nature of the West Wind. It is as if his heart were corrupted by a malevolent and brooding rancour. He devastates his own kingdom in the wantonness of his force. South-west is the quarter of the heavens where he presents his darkened brow. He breathes his rage in terrific squalls, and overwhelms his realm with an unexhaustible welter of clouds. He strews the seeds of anxiety upon the decks of scudding ships, makes the foam-stripped ocean look old, and sprinkles with grey hairs the heads of shipmasters in the homeward-bound ships running for the Channel. The Westerly Wind asserting his sway from the south-west quarter is often like a monarch gone mad, driving forth with wild imprecations the most faithful of his courtiers to shipwreck, disaster, and death.

The south-westerly weather is the thick weather *par excellence*. It is not the thickness of the fog; it is rather a contraction of the horizon, a mysterious veiling of the shores with clouds that seem to make a low vaulted dungeon around the running ship. It is not blindness: it is a shortening of the sight. The West Wind does not say to the seaman, "You shall be blind;" it restricts merely the range of his vision and raises the dread of land within his breast. It makes of him a man robbed of half his force, of half his efficiency. Many times in my life, standing in long sea-boots and streaming oil-skins at the elbow of my commander on the poop of a homeward-bound ship making for the Channel, and gazing ahead into the grey and tormented waste, I have heard a weary sigh shape itself into a studiously casual comment:

"Can't see very far in this weather."

And have made answer in the same low, perfunctory tone:

"No, sir."

It would be merely the instinctive voicing of an ever-present thought associated closely with the consciousness of the land somewhere ahead and of the great speed of the ship. Fair wind, fair wind! Who would dare to grumble at a fair wind? It was a favour of the Western King, who rules masterfully the North Atlantic from the latitude of the Azores to the latitude of Cape Farewell.⁷ A famous shove⁸ this to end a good passage with; and yet, somehow, one could not muster upon one's lips the smile of a courtier's gratitude. This favour was dispensed to you from under an overbearing scowl, which is the true ex-

pression of the great autocrat when he has made up his mind to give a battering to some ships and to hunt certain others home ⁹ in one breath of cruelty and benevolence, equally distracting.

"No, sir. Can't see very far."

Thus would the mate's voice repeat the thought of the master, both gazing ahead, while under their feet the ship rushes at some twelve knots in the direction of the lee shore; ¹⁰ and only a couple of miles in front of her swinging and dripping jib-boom, carried naked with an upward slant like a spear, a very horizon closes the view with a multitude of waves surging upwards violently as if to strike at the stooping clouds.

Awful and threatening scowls darken the face of the West Wind in his clouded, south-west mood; and from the King's throne-hall in the western board stronger gusts reach you, like the fierce shouts of raving fury to which only the gloomy grandeur of the scene imparts a saving dignity. A shower pelts the deck and the sails of the ship as if flung with a scream by an angry hand; and when the night closes in, the night of a south-westerly gale, it seems more hopeless than the shade of Hades. The south-westerly mood of the great West Wind is a lightless mood, without sun, moon, or stars, with no gleam of light but the phosphorescent flashes of the great sheets of foam that, boiling up on each side of the ship, fling bluish gleams upon her dark and narrow hull, rolling as she runs, chased by enormous seas, distracted in the tumult.

There are some bad nights in the kingdom of the West Wind for homeward-bound ships making for the Channel;

and the days of wrath ¹¹ dawn upon them colourless and vague like the timid turning up of invisible lights upon the scene of a tyrannical and passionate outbreak, awful in the monotony of its method and the increasing strength of its violence. It is the same wind, the same clouds, the same wildly racing seas, the same thick horizon around the ship. Only the wind is stronger, the clouds seem denser and more overwhelming, the waves appear to have grown bigger and more threatening during the night. The hours, whose minutes are marked by the crash of the breaking seas, slip by with the screaming, pelting squalls overtaking the ship as she runs on and on with darkened canvas, with streaming spars and dripping ropes. The downpours thicken. Preceding each shower a mysterious gloom, like the passage of a shadow above the firmament of grey clouds, filters down upon the ship. Now and then the rain pours upon your head in streams as if from spouts. It seems as if your ship were going to be drowned before she sank, as if all atmosphere had turned to water. You gasp, you splutter, you are blinded and deafened, you are submerged, obliterated, dissolved, annihilated, streaming all over as if your limbs, too, had turned to water. And every nerve on the alert you watch for the clearing-up mood of the Western King, that shall come with a shift of wind as likely as not to whip ¹² all the three masts out of your ship in the twinkling of an eye.

Heralded by the increasing fierceness of the squalls, sometimes by a faint flash of lightning like the signal ¹³ of a lighted torch waved far away behind the clouds, the shift of winds comes at last, the crucial moment of the

change from the brooding and veiled violence of the south-west gale to the sparkling,¹⁴ flashing, cutting, clear-eyed anger of the King's north-westerly mood. You behold another phase of his passion, a fury bejewelled with stars, mayhap bearing the crescent of the moon on its brow, shaking the last vestiges of its torn cloud-mantle in inky-black squalls, with hail and sleet descending like showers of crystals and pearls, bounding off the spars, drumming on the sails, pattering on the oilskin coats, whitening the decks of homeward-bound ships. Faint, ruddy flashes of lightning flicker in the starlight upon her mast-heads. A chilly blast hums in the taut rigging, causing the ship to tremble to her very keel, and the soaked men on her decks to shiver in their wet clothes to the very marrow of their bones. Before one squall has flown over to sink in the eastern board, the edge of another peeps up already above the western horizon, racing up swift, shapeless, like a black bag full of frozen water ready to burst over your devoted head. The temper of the ruler of the ocean has changed. Each gust of the clouded mood that seemed warmed by the heat of a heart flaming with anger has its counterpart in the chilly blasts that seem blown from a breast turned to ice with a sudden revulsion of feeling. Instead of blinding your eyes and crushing your soul with a terrible apparatus of cloud and mists and seas and rain, the King of the West turns his power to contemptuous pelting of your back with icicles, to making your weary eyes water as if in grief and your worn-out carcass quake pitifully.¹⁵ But each mood of the great autocrat has its own greatness, and each is hard to bear. Only the north-west phase of

that mighty display is not demoralizing to the same extent, because between the hail and sleet squalls of a north-westerly gale one can see a long way ahead.

To see! to see!—this is the craving of the sailor, as of the rest of blind humanity. To have his path made clear for him is the aspiration of every human being in our beclouded and tempestuous existence. I have heard a reserved, silent man, with no nerves to speak of after three days of hard running in thick south-westerly weather, burst out passionately: “I wish to God we could get sight of something!”

We had just gone down below for a moment to commune, in a battened-down cabin, with a large white chart lying limp and damp upon a cold and clammy table under the light of a smoky lamp. Sprawling over that seaman’s silent and trusted adviser, with one elbow upon the coast of Africa and the other planted in the neighbourhood of Cape Hatteras (it was a general track-chart of the North Atlantic), my skipper lifted his rugged, hairy face, and glared at me in a half-exasperated, half-appealing way. We have seen no sun, moon or stars for something like seven days. By the effect of the West Wind’s wrath the celestial bodies had gone into hiding for a week or more, and the last three days had seen the force of a south-west gale grow from fresh, through strong, to heavy, as the entries in my log-book could testify. Then we separated, he to go on deck again, in obedience to that mysterious call that seems to sound for ever in a shipmaster’s¹⁶ ears, I to stagger into my cabin with some vague notion of putting down the words “Very heavy weather” in a log-book not quite written

up-to date. But I gave it up, and crawled into my bunk instead, boots and hat on, all standing¹⁷ (it did not matter; everything was soaking wet, a heavy sea having burst the poop skylights the night before), to remain in a nightmarish state between waking and sleeping for a couple of hours of so-called rest.

The south-westerly mood of the West Wind is an enemy of sleep, and even of a recumbent position, in the responsible officers of a ship. After two hours of futile, light-headed, inconsequent thinking upon all things under heaven in that dark, dank, wet, and devastated cabin, I arose suddenly and staggered up on deck. The autocrat of the North Atlantic was still oppressing his kingdom and its outlying dependencies, even as far as the Bay of Biscay, in the dismal secrecy of thick, very thick, weather. The force of the wind, though we were running before it at the rate of some ten knots an hour, was so great that it drove me with a steady push to the front of the poop, where my commander was holding on.

"What do you think of it?" he addressed me in an interrogative yell.

What I really thought was that we both had had just about enough of it. The manner in which the great West Wind chooses at times to administer his possessions does not commend itself to a person of peaceful and law-abiding disposition, inclined to draw distinctions between right and wrong in the face of natural forces, whose standard, naturally, is that of might alone. But, of course, I said nothing. For a man caught, as it were, between his skipper and the great West Wind, silence is the safest sort of diplomacy. Moreover, I knew my skipper. He

did not want to know what I thought. Shipmasters hanging on a breath¹⁸ before the thrones of the winds ruling the seas have their psychology, whose workings are as important to the ship and those on board^d of her as the changing moods of the weather. The man, as a matter of fact, under no circumstances, ever cared a brass farthing for what I or anybody else in his ship thought. He had had just about enough of it, I guessed, and what he was at really was a process of fishing for a suggestion. It was the pride of his life that he had never wasted a chance, no matter how boisterous, threatening, and dangerous, of a fair wind. Like men racing blindfold for a gap in a hedge, we were finishing a splendidly quick passage from the Antipodes, with a tremendous rush for the Channel in as thick a weather as any I can remember, but his psychology did not permit him to bring the ship to with a fair wind blowing—at least not on his own initiative. And yet he felt that very soon indeed something would have to be done. He wanted the suggestion to come from me, so that later on, when the trouble was over, he could argue this point with his own uncompromising spirit, laying the blame upon my shoulders. I must render him the justice that his cort of pride was his only weakness.

But he got no suggestion from me. I understand his psychology. Besides, I had my own stock of weaknesses at the time (it is a different one now), and amongst them was the conceit of being remarkably well up in the psychology of the Westerly weather. I believed—not to mince matters—that I had a genius for reading the mind of the great ruler of high latitudes. I fancied I could

discern already the coming of a change in his royal mood. And all I said was:

"The weather'd bound to clear up with the shift of wind."

"Anybody knows that much!" he snapped at me, at the highest pitch of his voice.

"I mean before dark!" I cried.

This was all the opening he ever got from me. The eagerness with which he seized upon it gave me the measure of the anxiety he had been labouring under.

"Very well," he shouted, with an affection¹⁹ of impatience, as if giving way to long entreaties. "All right. If we don't get a shift by then we'll take that foresail off her and put her head under her wing for the night."

I was struck by the picturesque character of the phrase²⁰ as applied to a ship brought-to in order to ride out a gale with wave after wave passing under her breast. I could see her resting in the tumult of the elements like a sea-bird sleeping in wild weather upon the raging waters with its head tucked under its wing. In imaginative precision, in true feeling, this is one of the most expressive sentences I have ever heard on human lips. But as to taking the foresail off that ship before we put her head under her wing, I had my grave doubts. They were justified. The long enduring piece of canvas was confiscated by the arbitrary decree of the West Wind, to whom belong the lives of men and the contrivances of their hands within the limits of his kingdom. With the sound of a faint explosion it vanished into the thick weather bodily, leaving behind of its stout substance not so much as one solitary strip big enough to be picked

into a handful of lint for, say, a wounded elephant. Torn out of its bolt-ropes, it faded like a whiff of smoke in the smoky drift of clouds shattered and torn by the shift of wind. For the shift of wind had come. The unveiled, low sun glared angrily from a chaotic sky upon a confused and tremendous sea dashing itself upon a coast. We recognized the headland, and looked at each other in the silence of dumb wonder. Without knowing it in the least, we had run up alongside the Isle of Wight, and that tower, tinged a faint, evening red in the salt wind-haze, was the lighthouse of St. Catherine's Point.

My skipper recovered first from his astonishment. His bulging eyes sank back gradually into their orbits. His psychology, taking it all round, was really very creditable for an average sailor. He had been spared the humiliation of laying his ship to with a fair wind, and at once that man, of an open and truthful nature, spoke up in perfect good faith, rubbing together his brown, hairy hands—the hands of a master-craftsman upon the sea:

“Humph! that's just about where I reckoned we had got to.”

The transparency and ingenuousness, in a way, of that delusion, the airy tone, the hint of already growing pride, were perfectly delicious. But, in truth, this was one of the greatest surprises ever sprung by the clearing-up mood of the West Wind upon one of its most accomplished courtiers.

The winds of North and South are, as I have said, but small princes amongst the powers of the sea. They have no territory of their own; they are not reigning winds

anywhere. Yet it is from their houses that the reigning dynasties which have shared between them the waters of the earth are sprung. All the weather of the world is based upon the contest of the Polar and Equatorial strains of that tyrannous race. The West Wind is the greatest king. The East rules between the Tropics. They have shared each ocean between them. Each has his genius of supreme ruler. The King of the West never intrudes upon the recognized dominion of his kingly brother. He is a barbarian, of a northern type.²¹ Violent without craftiness, and furious without malice, one may imagine him seated masterfully with a double-edged sword on his knees upon the painted and gilt clouds of the sunset, bowing his shock head of golden locks, a flaming beard over his breast, imposing, colossal, mighty limbed, with a thundering voice, distended cheeks, and fierce blue eyes, urging the speed of his gales. The other, the East King, the king of blood-red sunrises, I represent to myself as a spare Southerner with clear-cut features, black-browed and dark-eyed, grey robed, upright in sunshine, resting a smooth-shaven cheek in the palm of his hand, impenetrable, secret, full of wiles, fine-drawn, keen—meditating aggressions.

The West Wind keeps faith with his brother, the King of the Easterly weather. "What we have divided we have divided," he seems to say in his gruff voice, this ruler without guile, who hurls as if in sport enormous masses of cloud across the sky, and flings the great waves of the Atlantic clear across from the shores of the New World on the hoary headlands of Old Europe, which harbours more kings and rulers upon its seamed and

furrowed body than all the oceans of the world tog' ther.

"What we have divided we have divided; and if no rest and peace in this world have fallen to my share, leave me alone. Let me play at quoits with cyclonic gales, flinging the discs of spinning cloud and whirling air from one end of my dismal kingdom to the other: over the Great Banks ²² or along the edges of pack-ice—this one with true aim right into the bight of the Bay of Biscay, that other upon the fiords of Norway, across the North Sea where the fishermen of many nations ²³ look watchfully into my angry eyes. 'This is the time of kingly sport.'" And the royal master of high latitudes sighs mightily, with the sinking sun upon his breast and the double-edged sword upon his knees, as if wearied by the innumerable centuries of a strenuous rule and saddened by the unchangeable aspect of the ocean under his feet—by the endless vista of future ages where the work of sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind shall go on and on till his realm of living waters becomes a frozen and motionless ocean. But the other, crafty and unmoved, nursing his shaven chin between the thumb and forefinger of his slim and treacherous hand, thinks deep within his heart full of guile: "Ah! our brother of the West has fallen into the mood of kingly melancholy. He is tired of playing with circular gales, and blowing great guns, and unrolling thick streamers of fog in wanton sport at the cost of his own poor miserable subjects. Their fate is most pitiful. Let us make a foray upon the dominions of that noisy barbarian, a great raid from Finisterre to Hatteras, ²⁴ catching his fishermen unawares, baffling the fleets that trust to his power, and shooting

sly a rows into the livers of men who court his good graces. He is, indeed, a worthless fellow." And forthwith, while the West Wind meditates upon the vanity of his irresistible might, the thing is done, and the Easterly weather sets in upon the North Atlantic.

The prevailing weather of the North Atlantic is typical of the way in which the West Wind rules his realm on which the sun never sets. North Atlantic is the heart of a great empire. It is the part of the West Wind's dominions most thickly populated with generations of fine ships and hardy men. Heroic deed and adventurous exploits have been performed there, within the very stronghold of his sway. The best sailors in the world have been born and bred under the shadow of his sceptre, learning to manage their ships with skill and audacity before the steps of his stormy throne. Reckless adventurers, toiling fishermen, admirals as wise and brave as the world has ever known, have waited upon the signs of his Westerly sky. Fleets of victorious ships have hung upon his breath. He has tossed in his hand squadrons of war-scarred three-deckers, and shredded out in mere sport the bunting of flags hallowed in the traditions of honour and glory. He is a good friend and a dangerous enemy, without mercy to unseaworthy ships and faint-hearted seamen. In his kingly way he has taken but little account of lives sacrificed to his impulsive policy; he is king with a double-edged sword bared in his right hand. The East Wind, an interloper in the dominions of Westerly weather, is an impassive-faced tyrant with a sharp poniard held behind his back for a treacherous stab.

In his forays into the North Atlantic the East Wind behaves like a subtle and cruel adventurer without a notion of honour or fair play. Veiling his clear-cut, lean face in a thin layer of hard, high cloud, I have seen him, like a wizened robber sheik ²⁵ of the sea, hold up large caravans of ships to the number of three hundred or more at the very gates of the English Channel. And the worst of it was that there was no ransom that we could pay to satisfy his avidity; for whatever evil is wrought by the raiding East Wind; it is done only to spite his kingly brother of the West. We gazed helplessly at the systematic, cold, grey-eyed obstinacy of the Easterly weather, while short rations became the order of the day, and the pinch of hunger under the breast-bone grew familiar to every sailor in that held-up fleet. Every day added to our numbers. In knots and groups and straggling parties we flung to and fro before the closed gate.²⁶ And meantime the outward-bound ships passed, running through our humiliated ranks under all the canvas they could show. It is my idea that the Easterly wind helps the ships away from home in the wicked hope that they shall all come to an untimely end and be heard of no more. For six weeks did the robber sheik hold the trade route of the earth, while our liege lord, the West Wind, slept profoundly like a tired Titan, or else remained lost in a mood of idle sadness known only to frank natures. All was still to the westward; we looked in vain towards his stronghold; the King slumbered on so deeply that he let his foraging brother steal the very mantle of gold-lined purple clouds from his bowed shoulders. What had become of the dazzling hoard of royal jewels exhibited

at every close of day? Gone, disappeared, extinguished, carried off without leaving a single gold band or the flash of a single sunbeam in the evening sky! Day after day through a cold streak of heavens as bare and poor as the inside of a rifled safe, a rayless and despoiled sun would slink shamefacedly, without pomp or show, to hide in haste under the waters. And still the King slept on, or mourned the vanity of his might and his powers while the thin-lipped intruder put the impress of his cold and implacable spirit upon the sky and sea. With every daybreak the rising sun had to wade through a crimson stream, luminous and sinister, like the spilt blood of celestial bodies murdered during the night.

In this particular instance the mean interloper held the road for some six weeks on end, establishing his particular administrative methods over the best part of the North Atlantic. It looked as if the Easterly weather had come to stay for ever, or, at least, till we had all starved to death in the held-up fleet—starved within sight, as it were, of plenty, within touch, almost, of the bountiful heart of the Empire. There we were, dotting with our white drab sails the hard blueness of the deep sea. There we were, a growing company of ships, each with her burden of grain, of timber, of wool, of hides, and even of oranges, for we had one or two belated fruit schooners in company. There we were, in that memorable spring of a certain year in the late seventies, dodging to and fro, baffled on every tack, and with our stores running down to sweepings of bread-lockers and scrapings of sugar-casks. It was just like the East Wind's nature to inflict starvation upon the bodies of unoffend-

ing sailors, while he corrupted their simple souls by an exasperation leading to outbursts of profanity as lurid as his blood-red sunrises. They were followed by grey days under the cover of high, motionless clouds that looked as if carved in a slab of ash-coloured marble. And each mean, starved sunset left us calling with imprecations upon the West Wind even in our liberty, if only to rush on and dash the heads of our ships against the very walls of our unapproachable home.

In the atmosphere of the Easterly weather, as pellucid as a piece of crystal and refracting like a prism, we could see the appalling numbers of our helpless company, even to those who in more normal conditions would have remained invisible, sails down, under the horizon. It is the malicious pleasure of the East Wind to augment the power of your eyesight, in order, perhaps, that you should see better the perfect humiliation, the hopeless character of your captivity. Easterly weather is generally clear, and that is all that can be said of it—almost supernaturally clear when it likes; but whatever its mood, there is something uncanny in its nature. Its duplicity is such that it will deceive a scientific instrument. No barometer will give warning of an Easterly gale, were it ever so wet. It would be an unjust and ungrateful thing to say that a barometer is a stupid contrivance. It is simply that the wiles of the East Wind are too much for its fundamental honesty. After years and years of experience the most trusty instrument of the sort that ever went to sea screwed on to a ship's cabin bulkhead will, almost invariably, be induced to rise by the diabolic ingenuity of the Easterly weather, just at the moment

when the Easterly weather, discarding its methods of hard, dry, impassive cruelty, contemplates drowning what is left of your spirit in torrents of a peculiar cold and horrid rain. The sleet-and-hail squalls following the lightning at the end of a Westerly gale are cold and numbing and stinging and cruel enough. But the dry, Easterly weather, when it turns to wet, seems to rain poisoned showers upon our head. It is a sort of steady, persistent, overwhelming, endlessly driving downpour, which makes your heart sick, and opens it to dismal forebodings. And the stormy mood of the Easterly weather looms back upon the sky with a peculiar and amazing blackness. The West Wind hangs heavy grey curtains of mist and spray before your gaze, but the Eastern interloper of the narrow seas, when he has mustered his courage and cruelty to the point of a gale, puts your eyes out, puts them out completely, makes you feel blind for life upon a lee-shore. It is the wind also that brings snow.

Out of his black and merciless heart he flings a white blinding sheet upon the ships of the sea. He has more manners of villainy, and no more conscience, than an Italian prince of the seventeenth century. His weapon is a dagger carried under a black cloak when he goes out on his unlawful enterprises. The mere hint of his approach fills with dread every craft that swims the sea, from fishing-smacks to four-masted ships that recognize the sway of the West Wind. Even in his most accommodating mood he inspires a dread of treachery. I have heard upwards of ten score of windlasses spring like one into clanking life in the dead of night, filling the Downs ²⁷

with a panic-struck sound of anchors being torn hurriedly out of the ground at the first breath of his approach. Fortunately, his heart often fails him: he does not always blow home upon our exposed coast; he has not the fearless temper of his Westerly brother.

The natures of these two winds that share the dominions of the great oceans are fundamentally different. It is strange that the winds which men are prone to style capricious remain true to their character in all the various regions of the earth. To us here, for instance, the East Wind comes across a great continent sweeping over the greatest body of solid land upon this earth. For the Australian east coast the East Wind is the wind of the ocean, coming across the greatest body of water upon the globe; and yet here and there its characteristics remain the same with a strange consistency in everything that is vile and base. The members of the West Wind's dynasty are modified in a way by the regions they rule, as a Hohenzollern,²⁸ without ceasing to be himself, becomes a Roumanian by virtue of his throne, or a Saxe-Coburg learns to put the dress of Bulgarian phrases upon his particular thoughts, whatever they are.

The autocratic sway of the West Wind, whether forty north or forty south of the Equator, is characterized by an open, generous, frank barbarous recklessness. For he is a great autocrat, and to be a great autocrat you must be a great barbarian. I have been too much moulded to his sway to nurse now any idea of rebellion in my heart. Moreover, what is a rebellion within the four walls of a room against the tempestuous rule of the West Wind? I remain faithful to the memory of the mighty

King with a double-edged sword in one hand, and the other holding out rewards of great daily runs and famously quick passages to those of his courtiers who knew how to wait watchfully for every sign of his secret mood. As we deep-water men always reckoned, he made one year in three fairly lively for anybody having business upon the Atlantic or down there along the "forties" ²⁹ of the Southern Ocean. You had to take the bitter with the sweet; and it cannot be denied he played carelessly with our lives and fortunes. But, then, he was always a great king, fit to rule over the great waters where, strictly speaking, a man would have no business whatever but for his audacity.

The audacious should not complain. A mere trader ought not to grumble at the tolls levied by a mighty king. His mightiness was sometimes very overwhelming; but even when you had to defy him openly, as on the banks of the Agulhas ³⁰ homeward bound from the East Indies, or on the outward passage round the Horn, ³¹ he struck at you fairly his stinging blows (full in the face too), and it was your business not to get too much staggered. And, after all, if you showed anything of a countenance, the good-natured barbarian would let you fight your way past the very steps of his throne. It was only now and then that the sword descended and a head fell; but if you fell you were sure of impressive obsequies and of a roomy, generous grave.

Such is the king to whom Viking chieftains bowed their heads, and whom the modern and palatial steamship defies with impunity seven times a week. And yet it is but defiance, not victory. The magnificent bar-

barian sits enthroned in a mantle of gold-lined clouds looking from on high on great ships gliding like mechanical toys upon his seas and on men who, armed with fire and iron, no longer need to watch anxiously for the slightest sign of his royal mood. He is disregarded; but he has kept all his strength, all his splendour, and a great part of his power. Time itself, that shakes all the thrones, is on the side of that king. The sword in his hand remains as sharp as ever upon both its edges; and he may well go on playing his royal game of quoits with hurricanes, tossing them over from the continent of republics to the continent of kingdoms, in the assurance that both the new republics and the old kingdoms, the heat of fire and the strength of iron, with the untold generations of audacious men, shall crumble to dust at the steps of his throne, and pass away, and be forgotten before his own rule comes to an end.

NOTES

1. *like monarchs*, note the sustained figure of speech.
2. *ægis*, impregnable defence (Greek).
3. *high latitudes*, the north.
4. *the garrison*, again the sustained figure of speech.
5. *fathomless*. Conrad indulges in a riot of adjectives.
6. *our seaboard*, the shores of Britain.
7. *Cape Farewell*, in Greenland.
8. *a famous shove*, pushed along by the wind in most excellent fashion; a nautical expression.
9. *hunt certain others home*, the ships are driven by violent gales into their harbours.
10. *lee shore*, a dangerous place for sailing ships.

11. *days of wrath*, because of the mist, the blindness, and the storms of wind and rain.

12. *to whip out*, to carry away in an instant without warning.

13. *like the signal*, a beautiful and expressive simile.

14. *sparkling*. Note again the author's fondness for adjectives.

15. *pitifully*. Notice that Conrad's sentences are often longer and more elaborate than those of most English essayists.

16. *shipmaster*, the captain, who had always an inner feeling that he ought to be on the bridge in case anything went wrong.

17. *all standing*, just as I stood, without disrobing.

18. *hanging on a breath*, i.e. their fate depends entirely upon the wind.

19. *an affection of*, pretending to be impatient.

20. *picturesque character of the phrase*. Conrad is a lover of such phrases.

21. *northern type*. Cf. this picture of the northern barbarian with Emerson's picture of Haldor.

22. *Great Banks*, off the shores of North America near Newfoundland.

23. *of many nations*, because the North Sea is a favourite place for fishing.

24. *Finisterre to Hatteras*, from Spain to North America, naming their most prominent headlands.

25. *wizened robber sheik*. Again the picturesque and sustained simile.

26. *the closed gate*. Until the wind changed the ships could not sail up the English Channel and so home.

27. *the Downs*, off the south-east shores of England; normally a safe anchorage for ships, but not when the east wind rises.

28. *Hohenzollern, Saxe-Coburg*, two princely German families.

29. *the "forties"*, referring to the latitudes.

30. *the Agulhas*, a cape to the east of the Cape of Good Hope.

31. *the Horn*, Cape Horn, the storm-swept cape at the southern extremity of South America.

EXERCISES

1. Give some examples of Conrad's use of figurative language and discuss its effectiveness. Do you think he overdoes it?
2. Conrad's style is "colourful and picturesque". Illustrate.
3. Explain: In the polity of winds, as amongst the tribes of the earth, the real struggle lies between East and West.
4. "He loves alliteration and a good adjective." Illustrate.
5. How far do you agree that Conrad's style lacks restraint?
6. Expand: To have his path made clear for him is the aspiration of every human being in our beclouded and tempestuous existence.
7. Give some examples of Conrad's use of words in pairs.
8. Describe in simple words without any metaphors the characteristics of the East Wind and the West Wind.
9. Show that Conrad is a true lover of the sea.

No. 15.—The British Character

GEORGE SANTAYANA

George Santayana was born in Madrid of Spanish parents in 1863. He received his education at Harvard University in the United States, and became Professor of Philosophy there. He has written much poetry, philosophy and criticism. He resembles Emerson in the purity of his English style; while he is like Conrad in using most of its legitimate embellishments. He has rather more humour than either; and he pokes mild fun at English habits in a manner reminiscent of Washington Irving. There is much sound philosophy in this essay on British character, which should be compared with Emerson's; but he does not disdain the occasional paradox, antithesis, rhetorical flight, or figurative aid to lucidity.

What is it that governs the Englishman? Certainly not intelligence; seldom passion; hardly self-interest, since what we call self-interest is nothing but some dull passion served by a brisk intelligence. The Englishman's heart is perhaps capricious or silent; it is seldom designing or mean. There are nations where people are always innocently explaining how they have been lying and cheating in small matters, to get out of some predicament, or secure some advantage; that seems to them a part of the art of living. Such is not the Englishman's way: it is easier for him to face or to break opposition than to circumvent it. If we tried to say that what governs him

is convention, we should have to ask ourselves how it comes about that England is the paradise of individuality, eccentricity, heresy, anomalies, hobbies and humours. Nowhere do we come oftener upon those two social abortions—the affected and the disaffected. Where else would a man inform you, with a sort of proud challenge, that he lived on nuts, or was in correspondence through a medium with Sir Joshua Reynolds,¹ or had been disgustingly housed when last in prison? Where else would a young woman, in dress and manners the close copy of a man, tell you that her parents were odious, and that she desired a husband but no children, or children without a husband? It is true that these novelties soon become the conventions of some narrower circle, or may even have been adopted *en bloc* in emotional desperation, as when people are converted; and the oddest sects demand the strictest self-surrender. Nevertheless, when people are dissident and supercilious by temperament, they manage to wear their uniforms with a difference,² turning them by some lordly adaptation into a part of their own person.

Let me come to the point boldly; what governs the Englishman is his inner atmosphere, the weathers in his soul. It is nothing particularly spiritual or mysterious. When he has taken his exercise and is drinking his tea or his beer and lighting his pipe; when, in his garden or by his fire, he sprawls in an aggressively comfortable chair; when, well washed and well brushed, he resolutely turns in church to the east and recites the Creed (with genuflections,³ if he likes genuflections) without in the least implying that he believes one word of it; when he hears or sings the most crudely sentimental and thinnest

of popular songs,⁴ unmoved but not disgusted; when he makes up his mind who is his best friend or his favourite poet; when he adopts a party or a sweetheart; when he is hunting or shooting or boating, or striding through the fields; when he is choosing his clothes or his profession—never is it a precise reason, or purpose, or outer fact that determines him; it is always the atmosphere of his inner man.

To say that this atmosphere was simply a sense of physical well-being, of coursing blood and a prosperous digestion, would be far too gross; for while psychic weather is all that, it is also a witness to some settled disposition, some ripening inclination for this or that, deeply rooted in the soul. It gives a sense of direction in life which is virtually a code of ethics, and a religion behind religion. On the other hand, to say it was the vision of any ideal or allegiance to any principle would be making it far too articulate and abstract. The inner atmosphere, when compelled to condense into words, may precipitate some curt maxim or over-simple theory as a sort of war-cry; but its puerile language does it injustice, because it broods at a much deeper level than language or even thought. It is a mass of dumb instincts and allegiances, the love of a certain quality of life, to be maintained manfully. It is pregnant with many a stubborn assertion and rejection. It fights under its trivial fluttering opinions like a smoking battleship under its flags and signals; you must consider, not what they are, but why they have been hoisted and will not be lowered. One is tempted at times to turn away in despair from the most delightful acquaintance—the picture of manliness, grace, simplicity and

honour, apparently rich in knowledge and humour—because of some enormous platitude he reverts to, some hopelessly stupid little dogma from which one knows that nothing can ever liberate him. The reformer must give him up; but why should one wish to reform a person so much better than oneself? He is like a thoroughbred horse, satisfying to the trained eye, docile to the light touch, and coursing in most wonderful unison with you through the open world. What do you care what words he uses? Are you impatient with the lark because he sings rather than talks? and if he could talk, would you be irritated by his curious opinions? Of course, if anyone positively asserts what is contrary to fact, there is an error, though the error may be harmless; and most divergences between men should interest us rather than offend us, because they are effects of perspective, or of legitimate diversity in experience and interests. Trust the man who hesitates in his speech and is quick and steady in action, but beware of long arguments and long beards. Jupiter⁵ decided the most intricate questions with a nod, and a very few words and no gestures suffice for the Englishman to make his inner mind felt most unequivocally when occasion arises.

Instinctively the Englishman is no missionary, no conqueror. He prefers the country to the town, and home to foreign parts. He is rather glad and relieved if only natives will remain natives and strangers strangers, and at a comfortable distance from himself. Yet outwardly he is most hospitable and accepts almost anybody for the time being; he travels and conquers without a settled design, because he has the instinct of exploration. His

adventures are all external; they change him so little that he is not afraid of them. He carries his English weather in his heart wherever he goes, and it becomes a cool spot in the desert, and a steady and sane oracle amongst all the deliriums of mankind. Never since the heroic days of Greece has the world had such a sweet, just, boyish master. It will be a black day for the human race when scientific blackguards, conspirators, churls and fanatics manage to supplant him.

NOTES

1. *Sir Joshua Reynolds* (1723-92), friend of Dr. Johnson, famous English artist and President of the Royal Academy. Of him Burke wrote: "He had too much merit not to excite some jealousy, too much innocence to provoke any enmity."

2. *wear with a difference*, a reminiscence of Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, iv. 5, 183.

3. *genuflections*, during the nineteenth century there were acute religious differences over questions of ritual, &c. Thus we had High Church and Low Church.

4. *popular songs*. The universal popularity of "Tipperary" during the Great War is an example.

5. *Jupiter*, the supreme God of the Romans.

EXERCISES

1. Explain: What governs the Englishman is his inner atmosphere.

2. In what respects does Santayana's Englishman appear to be paradoxical?

3. Compare Emerson's estimate of the British character with this author's.

4. Explain and expand: Beware of long arguments and long beards.

5. Would you agree that foreigners like Conrad and Santayana exploit the possibilities of English expression more fully than native writers do?

6. Discuss: Santayana loves all the embellishments of English style.

7. Do you think his style lacks restraint?

8. What qualities must a successful colonizing nation possess?

No. 16.—Thoughts at the Ferry

E. V. LUCAS

Mr. Edward Verrall Lucas was born in 1868. He is celebrated as a descriptive essayist with a light and playful touch, and he is blessed with an amiable view of life. He is an authority on Charles Lamb, having edited his works and written his biography. Most people, it may be, know him best as the author of the delightful "Wanderer" series of books about famous cities; but he has also written novels and some verse as well. He has even written a drama. One thinks of him, however, as first and foremost an essayist, who combines amazing inventiveness with high literary craftsmanship. In *Thoughts at the Ferry* we find him in his lightest mood. He surprises us with the unexpectedness of his thoughts, the ingenuity of his mind. We had never even imagined these facts about the ferryman which Mr. Lucas presents so convincingly.

My acquaintance among ferrymen is not extensive, but I cannot remember any that were cheerful. Perhaps there are none. The one over there, on the other side, who is being so deliberate—he certainly has no air of gaiety.

There is a wealth of reasons for this lack of mirth. To begin with, a boat on a river is normally a vehicle of pleasure; but the ferryman's boat is a drudge. Then, the ordinary course of a boat on a river is up or down, between banks that can provide excitement, and around

bends, each one of which may reveal adventure; but the ferryman's boat must constantly cross from side to side, always from the same spot to the same spot and back again, which is subversive of joy. All that the ferryman knows of the true purposes of a river he gains from observation of others, who gaily pass him, pulling with the stream or against it, and singing, perhaps, as they row. Did a ferryman ever sing? There was, when I was a boy, a pretty song about Twickenham Ferry,¹ but my recollections of it are that it was the passenger who sang: not, I fancy, in the boat, but before he entered it. If my memory is right, the fact is significant. In the company of such taciturnity and gloom, who could carol?

The ferryman, again, must never leave his post. All the world may go wayfaring, but not he. To cross a river is in itself nothing; but to come, from somewhere unknown, to the bank of the river, cross it, and pass on to unknown bournes on the other side—that is an enterprise, and that is what everyone but the ferryman is doing. I have written before—it is a recurring theme of sympathy—of the servants of the traveller who live by helping him on his eventful way but never participate in any wanderings—railway porters, for example—and the ferryman is perhaps chief, because so much of the very matter of romance—a running stream—comes into his daily routine. There he is, in the open air, with the breeze to fan and lure him, and the racing clouds to lift his thoughts, and the exciting sound of water in his ears; all the enticements to rove, but he must not be a rover. For the rest of us (as it must seem to him), exploration; for himself, the narrow confines of the known!

And it is a peculiarity of ferrymen that when you want them they are (like this reluctant fellow) always on the other side. Not from any natural desire to annoy, but through a whim of the gods; yet how it must add fuel to their misanthropic fire! If every journey were with a fare, the ferryman might be a shade more cheerful, even though the payment is so trifling. Was there ever a rich ferryman? Has a whimsical millionaire ever played at being a ferrym'an? Has a Carnegie² ever left a ferryman a legacy? And then the brevity of their companions! Not that most ferrymen seem to desire human intercourse; but perhaps they did once, before the monotony of their task soured them. Down to the boat come the strangers from the great world—young or old, forbidding or beautiful, ardent or pensive—and howsoever the ferryman would like to hold them and talk with them, no sooner does the boat touch the farther bank than they are off again! Does not that make for a certain moroseness?

And what was the ferryman before he was a ferryman? For seldom, I should guess, is his an hereditary post. Some kind of failure normally precedes; and there again is cause for reticence.

Such friends as ferrymen possess are usually dumb animals. I have known more than one who carried his dog with him; and once, on the Wye,³ I met one whose companion was a goose. No matter how often the crossing had to be made, the goose made it too. I used the ferry several times, and we were never without this escort; and the ferryman (who, I am bound to remark, humiliating though it be, propelled his boat from side

to side, not with honest oars, but by means of a rope) emerged sufficiently from his apathy to praise the bird's fidelity. "Here," thought I, "is surely the material for a pertinent apologue."⁴ 'The Ferryman and the Goose'; the very title is *Æsopian*.⁵ Or—to be more satirical—the title might be 'The Ferryman and the Swan', the point being that he thought it was a swan, but in reality it was only a goose." But I had no further inspiration. And yet, by a practised homilist, a good deal could be done with it with which to score off poor human nature. "Ah! my friends"⁶—surely it is fittest for the pulpit, after all?—"Ah! my friends, may not each of us be as much in error as that poor deluded ferryman? Let us search our hearts and answer truthfully the questions: Do we know our friends as we ought? Does not their flattery perhaps blind us to their mediocrity? In short, are they swans or geese?"

Ferryman—

But here is our man at last! On close inspection, how dismal he looks!

NOTES

1. *Twickenham Ferry*, Twickenham is on the Thames to the west of London.

2. *a Carnegie*, Andrew Carnegie was a Scottish millionaire who made his money at Pittsburg in the United States. He was a great philanthropist, and founded the Carnegie Endowment for poor Scottish students. His particular hobby was to present towns and cities with public libraries.

3. *the Wye*, a river in the west of England, between Monmouthshire and Herefordshire. Tintern Abbey stands on its bank some miles from the Bristol Channel.

4. *pertinent apologue*, moral fable very much to the point.
5. *Æsopian*, referring to Æsop, the Greek writer of fables.
6. *Ah! my friends!* imitating the language of the preacher.

EXERCISES

1. Explain: (a) 'The ferryman's boat is a drudge. (b) Much of the matter of romance comes into the ferryman's daily routine.
2. What opinion do you gather from this essay about the personal characteristics of the author?
3. What are the unexpected facts which the essayist produces about ferrymen?
4. What are the qualities of his style?
5. Mr. Lucas was the biographer of Lamb. Do you think that he has come under the influence of the earlier essayist?

No. 17.—Talking at Large

JOHN GALSWORTHY

John Galsworthy was born in 1867 and died in 1933. Educated at Harrow and Oxford, he was called to the Bar in 1890; but he is famous as a writer of novels and plays. Of the former the *Forsyte Saga* series is best known, with, amongst others, *The Man of Property*, *To Let*, *The White Monkey*, and *The Silver Spoon*. Other stories are: *The Island Pharisees*, *The Patrician*, *The Inn of Tranquillity*, *The Dark Flower*, *The Freeland*, *Five Tales*, *Saint's Progress*. They appeared regularly between 1904 and 1926. His plays are: *The Silver Box*, *Joy*, *Strife*, *Justice*, *The Little Dream*, *The Pigeon*, *The Eldest Son*, *The Fugitive*, *The Mob*, *A Bit o' Love*, *The Foundations*, *The Skin Game*, *A Family Man*, *Loyalties*, *The Forest*, *The Show*, *Escape*. In 1912 there also appeared a book of verse called *Moods, Songs and Doggerels*.

Galsworthy is a serious and thoughtful essayist, who chooses to discuss national, international, and world problems, such as those he propounds in *Talking at Large*. Some of his views, judged in the light of more recent happenings in Europe, are almost prophetic. He has humour and irony, combined with a taste for paradox, and reveals a command of colloquial and idiomatic expression rather foreign to his usual style.

It is of the main new factors ¹ which have come into the life of the civilized world that I would speak.

The division deep and subtle between those who have fought and those who have not, concerns us in Europe

far more than you in America; for in proportion to your population the number of your soldiers who actually fought has been small, compared with the number' in any belligerent European country. And I think so far as you are concerned the division will soon disappear, for the iron had not time to enter into the souls of your soldiers. For us in Europe, however, this factor is very tremendous, and will take a long time to wear away. In my country the, as it were, professional English dislike to the expression of feeling, which strikes every American so forcibly, covers very deep hearts and highly sensitive nerves. The average Briton is now not at all stolid underneath; I think he has changed a great deal in this last century, owing to the town life which seven-tenths of our population lead. Perhaps only of the Briton may one still invent the picture which appeared in *Punch* in the autumn of 1914—of the steward on a battleship asking the naval lieutenant: "Will you take your bath before or after the engagement, sir?" and only among Britons hear one stoker say to another in the heat of a sea-fight: "Well, wot I say is—'E ought to 'ave married 'er." For all that, the Briton feels deeply; and on those who have fought the experiences of the battlefield have had an effect which almost amounts to metamorphosis. There are now two breeds of British people—such as have been long in the danger zones, and such as have not; shading, of course, into each other through the many who have just smelled powder and peril, and the very few whose imaginations are vibrant enough to have lived the two lives, while only living one.

In a certain cool paper called *The Balance-sheet of the*

Soldier Workman I tried to come at the effect of the war; but purposely pitched it in a low and sober key; and there is a much more poignant tale of change to tell of each individual human being.

Take a man who, when the war broke out (or had been raging perhaps a year), was living the ordinary Briton's life, in factory, shop, and home. Suppose that he went through that deep, sharp struggle between the pull of home love and interests, and the pull of country (for I hope it will never be forgotten that five million Britons were volunteers),² and came out committed to his country. That then he had to submit to being rattled at great speed³ into the soldier-shape which we Britons and you Americans have been brought up to regard as but the half of a free man; that then he was plunged into such a hideous hell of horrible danger and discomfort as this planet has never seen; came out of it time and again, went back into it time and again; and finally emerged, shattered or unscathed, with a spirit at once uplifted and enlarged, yet bruised and ungeared for the old life of peace.⁴ Imagine such a man set back among those who have not been driven and grilled and crucified. What would he feel, and how bear himself? On the surface he would no doubt disguise the fact that he felt different from his neighbours—he would conform; but something within him would ever be stirring, a sort of superiority, an impatient sense that he had been through it and they had not; the feeling, too, that he had seen the bottom of things, that nothing he could ever experience again would give him the sensations he had had out there; that he had lived, and there could be

nothing more to it. I don't think that we others quite realize what it must mean to these men, most of them under thirty, to have been stretched to the uttermost, to have no illusions left, and yet have, perhaps, forty years still to live. There is something gained in them, but there's something gone from them. The old sanctions, the old values don't hold; are there any sanctions and values which can be made to hold? A kind of unreality must needs cling about their lives henceforth. This is a finespun way of putting it, but I think, at bottom, true.

The old professional soldier lived for his soldiering. At the end of a war (however terrible) there was left to him a vista of more wars, more of what had become to him the ultimate reality—his business in life. For these temporary soldiers of what has been not so much a war as a prolonged piece of very horrible carnage, there succeeds something so mild in sensation that it simply will not fill the void. When the dish of life has lost its savour,⁵ by reason of violent and uttermost experience, wherewith shall it be salted?

The American Civil War⁶ was very long and very dreadful, but it was a human and humane business compared with what Europe has just come through. There is no analogy in history for the present moment. An old soldier of that Civil War, after hearing these words, wrote me an account of his after-career, which shows that in exceptional cases a life so stirring, full, and even dangerous may be lived that no void is felt. But one swallow does not make a summer, nor will a few hundreds or even thousands of such lives leaven to any extent the vast lump of human material used in this

war. The spiritual point is this: In front of a man in ordinary civilized existence there hovers ever that moment in the future when he expects to prove himself more of a man than he has yet proved himself. For these soldiers of the Great Carnage the moment of probation is already in the past. They *have* proved themselves as they will never have the chance to do again, and secretly they know it. One talks of their powers of heroism and sacrifice being wanted just as much in time of Peace; but that cannot really be so, because Peace times do not demand men's lives—which is the ultimate test—with every minute that passes. No, the great moment of their existence lies behind them, young though so many of them are. This makes them at once greater than us, yet in a way smaller, because they have lost the power and hope of expansion. They have lived their masterpiece already. Human nature is elastic, and hope springs eternal;⁷ but a *climax* of experience and sensation cannot be repeated; I think these have reached and passed the uttermost climax; and in Europe they number millions.

This is a veritable portent, and I am glad that in America you will not have it to any great extent.

Now how does this affect the future? Roughly speaking it must, I think, have a diminishing effect on what I may call loosely—Creative ability. People have often said to me: “We shall have great writings and paintings from these young men when they come back.” We shall certainly have poignant expression of their experiences and sufferings; and the best books and paintings of the war itself are probably yet to come. But, taking the long view, I do not believe we shall have from them, in the

end, as much creative art and literature as we should have had if they had not been through the war. Illusion about life, and interest in ordinary daily experience and emotion, which, after all, are to be the stuff of their future as of ours, has in a way been blunted or destroyed for them. And in the other provinces of life, in industry, in trade, in affairs, how can we expect from men who have seen the utter uselessness of money or comfort or power in the last resort, the same naïve faith in these things, or the same driving energy towards the attaining of them that we others exhibit?

It may be cheering to assume that those who have been almost superhuman these last four years in one environment will continue to be almost superhuman under conditions the very opposite. But, alack! it is not logical.

On the other hand, I think that those who have had this great and racking experience will be left, for the most part, with a real passion for Justice;⁸ and that this will have a profoundly modifying effect on social conditions. I think, too, that many of them will have a sort of passion for humaneness, which will, if you will suffer me to say so, come in very handy;⁹ for I have observed that the rest of us, through reading about horrors, have lost the edge of our gentleness, and have got into the habit of thinking that it is the business of women and children to starve, if they happen to be German; of creatures to be underfed and overworked if they happen to be horses; of families to be broken up if they happen to be aliens; and that a general carelessness as to what suffering is necessary and what is not, has set in. And,

queer as it may seem, I look to those who have been in the thick of the worst suffering the world has ever seen to set us in the right path again, and to correct the vitriolic sentiments engendered by the armchair¹⁰ and the inkpot, in times such as we have been and are still passing through. A cloistered life in times like these engenders bile; in fact, I think it always does. For sheer ferocity there is no place, you will have noticed, like a club full of old gentlemen. I expect the men who have come home from killing each other to show us the way back to brotherliness! And not before it's wanted. Here is a little true story of wartime, when all men were supposed to be brothers if they belonged to the same nation. In the fifth year of the war two men sat alone in a railway carriage. One, pale, young, and rather worn, had an unlighted cigarette in his mouth. The other, elderly, prosperous, and of a ruddy countenance, was smoking a large cigar.

The young man, who looked as if his days were strenuous, took his unlighted cigarette from his mouth, gazed at it, searched his pockets, and looked at the elderly man. His nose twitched, vibrated by the scent of the cigar, and he said suddenly:

"Could you give me a light, sir?"

The elderly man regarded him for a moment, drooped his eyelids, and murmured:

"I've no matches."

The young man sighed, mumbling the cigarette in his watering lips, then said very suddenly:

"Perhaps you'll kindly give me a light from your cigar, sir."

The elderly man moved throughout his body as if something very sacred had been touched within him.

"I'd rather not" he said; "if you don't mind."

A quarter of an hour passed, while the young man's cigarette grew moister, and the elder man's cigar shorter. Then the latter stirred, took it from under his grey moustache, looked critically at it, held it out a little way towards the other with the side which was least burned-down foremost, and said:

"Unless you'd like to take it from the edge."

On the other hand, one has often travelled in these last years with extreme embarrassment because our soldiers were so extraordinarily anxious that one should smoke their cigarettes, eat their apples, and their sausages. The marvels of comradeship they have performed would fill the libraries of the world.

The second main new factor in the world's life is the disappearance of the old autocracies.

In 1910, walking in Hyde Park¹¹ with a writer friend, I remember saying: "It's the hereditary autocracies in Germany, Austria, and Russia which make the danger of war." He did not agree—but no two writers agree with each other at any given moment. "If only autocracies go down in the wreckage of this war!" was almost the first thought I put down in writing when the war broke out. Well, they are gone! They were an anachronism, and without them and the bureaucracies and secrecy which buttressed them we should not, I think, have had this world catastrophe. But let us not too glibly assume that the forms of government which take their place can steer¹² the battered ships of the nation in the very troubled

waters of to-day, or that they will be truly democratic. Even highly democratic statesmen have been known to resort to the way of the headmaster at my old school,¹³ who put a motion to the masters' meeting and asked for a show of hands in its favour. Not one hand was held up. "Then," he said, "I shall adopt it with the greater regret." Nevertheless, the essential new factor is, that, whereas in 1914 civilization was on two planes, it is now, theoretically, at least, on the one democratic plane or level. That is a great easing of the world-situation, and removes a chief cause of international misunderstanding. The rest depends on what we can now make of democracy. Surely no word can so easily be taken in vain; to have got rid of the hereditary principle in government is by no means to have made democracy a real thing. Democracy is neither government by rabble, nor government by caucus. Its measure as a beneficent principle is the measure of the intelligence, honesty, public spirit, and independence of the average voter. The voter who goes to the poll blind of an eye and with a cast in the other, so that he sees no issue clear, and every issue only in so far as it effects him personally, is not precisely the sort of ultimate administrative power we want. Intelligent, honest, public-spirited, and independent voters guarantee an honest and intelligent governing body. The best men the best government, is a truism which cannot be refuted. Democracy to be real and effective must succeed in throwing up into the positions of administrative power the most trustworthy of its able citizens. In other words, it must incorporate and make use of the principle of aristocracy; government

by the best—*best in spirit*, not best-born. Rightly seen, there is no tug between democracy and aristocracy; aristocracy should be the means and machinery by which democracy works itself out. What then can be done to increase in the average voter intelligence and honesty, public spirit and independence? Nothing save by education. The Arts, the Schools, the Press. It is impossible to overestimate the need for vigour, breadth, restraint, good taste, enlightenment, and honesty in these three agencies. The artist, the teacher (and among teachers one includes, of course, religious teachers in so far as they concern themselves with the affairs of this world), and the journalist have the future in their hands. As they are fine the future will be fine; as they are mean the future will be mean. The burden is very specially on the shoulders of Public Men, and that most powerful agency the Press, which reports them. Do we realize the extent to which the modern world relies for its opinions on public utterances and the Press? Do we realize how completely we are all in the power of report? Any little lie or exaggerated sentiment uttered by one with a bee in his bonnet,¹⁴ with a principle, or an end to serve, can, if cleverly expressed and distributed, distort the views of thousands, sometimes of millions. Any wilful suppression of truth for Party or personal ends can so falsify our vision of things as to plunge us into endless cruelties and follies. Honesty of thought and speech and written word is a jewel, and they who curb prejudice and seek honourably to know and speak the truth are the only true builders of a better life. But what a dull world if we can't chatter and write irresponsibly, can't slop over with

hatred, or pursue our own ends without scruple! To be tied to the apron strings of truth, or coiffed¹⁵ with the nightcap of silence; who in this age of cheap ink and oratory will submit to such a fate? And yet, if we do not want another seven million violent deaths, another eight million maimed and halt and blind, and if we do not want anarchy, our tongues must be sober, and we must tell the truth. Report, I would almost say, now rules the world and holds the fate of man on the sayings of its many tongues. If the good sense of mankind cannot somehow restrain utterance and clearse report, Democracy, so highly vaunted, will not save us; and all the glib words of promise spoken might as well have lain unuttered in the throats of orators. We are always in peril under Democracy of taking the line of least resistance and immediate material profit. The gentleman, for instance, whoever he was, who first discovered that he could sell his papers better by undercutting the standard of his rivals, and appealing to the lower tastes of the Public under the flag of that convenient expression "What the Public wants", made a most evil discovery. The Press is for the most part in the hands of men who know what is good and right. It can be a great agency for levelling up. But whether on the whole it is so or not, one continually hears doubted. There ought to be no room for doubt in any of our minds that the Press is on the side of the angels. It can do as much as any other single agency to raise the level of honesty, intelligence, public spirit, and taste in the average voter; in other words, to build Democracy on a sure foundation. This is a truly tremendous trust; for the safety of civilization and the

happiness of mankind hang thereby. The saying ¹⁶ about little children and the kingdom of heaven was meant for the ears of all those who have it in their power to influence simple folk. To be a good and honest editor, a good and honest journalist is in these days to be a veritable benefactor of mankind.

Now take the function of the artist, of the man who, in stone, or music, marble, bronze, paint, or words, can express himself, and the vision of life, truly and beautifully. Can we set limit to his value? The answer is in the affirmative. We set such limitation to his value that he has been known to die of it. And I would only venture to say here that if we don't increase the store we set by him, we shall, in this reach-me-down age of machines and wholesale standardizations, emulate the Goths ¹⁷ who did their best to destroy the art of Rome, and all these centuries later, by way of atonement, have filled the Thiergarten ¹⁸ at Berlin and the City of London with peculiar brands of statuary, and are always writing their names on the Sphinx.¹⁹

I suppose the hardest lesson we all have to learn in life is that we can't have things both ways. If we want to have beauty, that which appeals not merely to the stomach and the epidermis (which is the function of the greater part of industrialism), but to what lies deeper within the human organism, the heart and the brain, we must have conditions which permit and even foster the production of beauty. The artist, unfortunately, no less than the rest of mankind, must eat to live. Now, if we insist that we will pay the artist only for what fascinates the popular uneducated instincts, he will either produce

beauty, remain unpaid and starve; or he will give us shoddy, and fare sumptuously every day. My experience tells me this: An artist who is by accident of independent means can, if he has talent, give the Public what he, the artist, wants, and sooner or later the public will take whatever he gives it, at his own valuation. But very few artists *who have no independent means* have enough character to hold out until they can sit on the Public's head and pull the Public's beard, to use the old Sikh saying. How many times have I not heard over here ²⁰—and it's very much the same over there—that a man must produce this or that kind of work or else of course he can't live. My advice—at all events to young artists and writers—is: “Sooner than do that and have someone sitting on *your* head and pulling your beard all the time, go out of business—there are other means of making a living, besides faked or degraded art. Become a dentist and revenge yourself on the Public's teeth—even editors and picture-dealers go to the dentist!” The artist has got to make a stand against being exploited, and he has got, also, to live the kind of life which will give him a chance to see clearly, to feel truly, and to express beautifully. He, too, is a trustee for the future of mankind. Money has one inestimable value—it guarantees independence, the power of going your own way and giving out the best that's in you. But, generally speaking, we don't stop there in our desire for money; and I would say that any artist who doesn't stop there is not “playing the game”, neither towards himself nor towards mankind; he is not standing up for the faith that is in him, and the future of civilization.

And now what of the teacher? One of the discouraging truths of life is the fact that a man cannot raise himself from the ground by the hair of his own head. And if one took Democracy logically, one would have to give up the idea of improvement. But things are not always what they seem, as somebody once said; ²¹ and fortunately, government "of the people by the people for the people" does not in practice prevent the people from using those saving graces—Common Sense and Selection. In fact, only by the use of those graces will democracy work at all. When twelve men get together to serve on a jury, their common sense makes them select the least stupid among them to be their foreman. Each of them, of course, feels that he is that least stupid man, but since a man cannot vote for himself, he votes for the least dense among his neighbours, and the foreman comes to life. The same principle applied thoroughly enough throughout the social system produces Government by the best. And it is more vital to apply it *thoroughly* in matters of education than in other branches of human activity. But when we have secured our best heads of education, we must trust them and give them real power, for they are the hope—well-nigh the only hope—of our future. They alone, by the selection and instruction of their subordinates and the curricula which they lay down, can do anything substantial in the way of raising the standard of general taste, conduct, and learning. They alone can give the starting push towards greater dignity and simplicity; promote the love of proportion, and the feeling for beauty. They alone can gradually instil into the body politic the understanding that education

is not a means towards wealth as such, or learning as such, but towards the broader ends of health and happiness. The first necessity for improvement in modern life is that our teachers should have the wide' view, and be provided with the means and the curricula which make it possible to apply this enlightenment to their pupils. Can we take too much trouble to secure the best men as heads of education—that most responsible of all positions in the modern State? The child is father to the man. We think too much of politics and too little of education. We treat it almost as cavalierly as the undergraduate treated the Master of Balliol.²² "Yes," he said, showing his people round the quadrangle, "that's the Master's window;" then, picking up a pebble, he threw it against the window-pane. "And that," he said, as a face appeared, "is the Master!" Democracy has come, and on education Democracy hangs; the thread as yet is slender.

It is a far cry to the third new factor: Exploitation of the air. We were warned by Sir Hiram Maxim²³ about 1910 that a year or so of war would do more for the conquest of the air than many years of peace. It has. We hear of a man flying 260 miles in ninety minutes; of the Atlantic being flown in twenty-four hours; of airships which will have a lifting capacity of 300 tons; of air mail-routes all over the world. The time will perhaps come when we shall live in the air, and come down to earth on Sundays.

I confess that, mechanically marvellous as all this is, it interests me chiefly as a prime instance of the way human beings prefer the shadow of existence to its

substance. Granted that we speed up everything, that we annihilate space, that we increase the powers of trade, leave no point of the earth unsurveyed, and are able to perform air-stunts which people will pay five dollars apiece to see—how shall we have furthered human health, happiness, and virtue, speaking in the big sense of these words? It is an advantage, of course, to be able to carry food to a starving community in some desert; to rescue shipwrecked mariners; to have a letter from one's wife four days sooner than one could otherwise; and generally to save time in the swopping of our commodities and the journeys we make. But how does all this help human beings to inner contentments of spirit and health of body? Did the arrival of motor-cars, bicycles, telephones, trains, and steamships do much for them in that line? Anything which serves to stretch human capabilities to the utmost, would help human happiness, if each new mechanical activity, each new human toy as it were, did not so run away with our sense of proportion as to debauch our energies. A man, for instance, takes to motoring, who used to ride or walk; it becomes a passion with him, so that he now never rides or walks—and his calves become flabby and his liver enlarged. A man puts a telephone into his house to save time and trouble, and is straightway a slave to the tinkle of its bell. The few human activities in themselves and of themselves pure good are just eating, drinking, sleeping, and the affections—in moderation; in inhaling of pure air, exercise in most of its forms, and interesting creative work—in moderation; the study and contemplation of the arts and Nature—in moderation; thinking of others

and not of yourself—in moderation; doing kind acts and thinking kind thoughts. All the rest seems to be what the prophet ²⁴ had in mind when he said: "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity!" Ah! but the one great activity—adventure and craving for sensation! It is that for which the human being really lives, and all his restless activity is caused by the desire for it. True; yet adventure and sensation without rhyme or reason lead to disharmony and disproportion. We may take civilization to the South Sea Islands, but it would be better to leave the islanders naked and healthy than to improve them with trousers and civilization off the face of the earth. We may invent new cocktails, but it would be better to stay dry.²⁵ In mechanical matters I am reactionary, for I cannot believe in inventions and machinery unless they can be controlled so as to minister definitely to health and happiness—and how difficult that is! In my own country the townsman has become physically inferior to the countryman (speaking in the large),²⁶ and I infer from this that we British—at all events—are not so in command of ourselves and our wonderful inventions and machines that we are putting them to uses which are really beneficent. If we had proper command of ourselves, no doubt we could do this, but we haven't; and if you look about you in America, the same doubt may possibly attack you.

But there is another side to the exploitation of the air which does not as yet affect you in America as it does us in Europe—the destructive side. Britain, for instance, is no longer an island. In five or ten years it will, I think, be impossible to guarantee the safety of Britain, and

Britain's commerce, by sea-power; and those who continue to pin faith to that formula will find themselves nearly as much back-numbered ²⁷ as people who continued to prefer wooden ships to iron, when the iron age came in. Armaments on land and sea will be limited; not, I think, so much by a League of Nations, if it comes, as by the common sense of people who begin to observe that with the development of the powers of destruction and of transport from the air, land and sea armaments are becoming of little use. We may all disarm completely, and yet—so long as there are flying machines and high explosives—remain almost as formidably destructive as ever. So difficult to control, so infinite in its possibilities for evil, and so limited in its possibilities for good do I consider this exploitation of the air that, personally, I would rejoice to see the nations in solemn conclave agree this very minute to ban the use of the air altogether, whether for trade, travel, or war; destroy every flying-machine and every airship, and forbid their construction. That, of course, is a consummation which will remain devoutly to be wished. Every day one reads in one's paper that some country or other is to take the lead in the air. What a wild-goose chase we are in for! I verily believe mankind will come one day in their underground dwellings to the annual practice of burning in effigy the Guy ²⁸ (whoever he was) who first rose off the earth. After I had talked in this strain once before, a young airman came up to me and said: "Have you been up?" I shook my head. "You wait," he said. When I do go up I shall take great pains not to go up with that one.

We now come to the fourth great new factor—Bol-

shevism, and the social unrest. But I am shy of saying anything about it, for my knowledge and experience are insufficient. I will only offer one observation. Whatever philosophic cloak may be thrown over the shoulders of Bolshevism,²⁹ it is obviously—like every revolutionary movement of the past—an aggregation of individual discontents, the sum of millions of human moods of dissatisfaction with the existing state of things; and whatever philosophic cloak we drape on the body of liberalism, if by that name we may designate our present social and political system—that system has clearly not yet justified its claim to the word evolutionary, so long as the disproportion between the very rich and the very poor continues (as hitherto it has) to grow. No system can properly be called evolutionary which provokes against it the rising of so formidable a revolutionary wave of discontent. One hears that co-operation is now regarded as *vieux jeu*.³⁰ If that be so, it is because co-operation, in its true sense of spontaneous friendliness between man and man, has never been tried. Perhaps human nature in the large can never rise to that ideal. But if it cannot, if industrialism cannot achieve a change of heart, so that in effect employers would rather their profits (beyond a quite moderate scale) were used for the amelioration of the lot of those they employ, it looks to me uncommonly like³¹ being the end of the present order of things, after an era of class-struggle which will shake civilization to its foundations. Being myself an evolutionist, who fundamentally distrusts violence, and admires the old Greek saying: “God is the helping of man by man”, I yet hope it will not come to that; I yet

believe we may succeed in striking the balance, without civil wars. But I feel that (speaking of Europe) it is touch and go. In America, in Canada, in Australia, the conditions are different, the powers of expansion still large, the individual hopefulness much greater. There is little analogy with the state of things in Europe; but whatever happens in Europe must have its infectious influence in America. The wise man takes Time by the forelock—and goes in front of events.

Let me turn away to the fifth great new factor: the impetus towards a League of Nations.

This, to my thinking, so wholly advisable, would inspire more hopefulness if the condition of Europe was not so terribly confused, and if the most salient characteristics of human nature were not elasticity, bluntness of imagination, and shortness of memory. Those of us who, while affirming the principle of the League, are afraid of committing ourselves to what obviously cannot at the start be a perfect piece of machinery, seem inclined to forget that if the assembled Statesmen fail to *place in running order, now*, some definite machinery for the consideration of international disputes, the chance will certainly slip. We cannot reckon on more than a very short time during which the horror of war will rule our thoughts and actions. And during that short time it is essential that the League should have had some tangible success in preventing war. Mankind puts its faith in facts, not theories; in proven, and not in problematic, success. One can imagine with what profound suspicion and contempt the armed individualists of the Neolithic Age³² regarded the first organized tribunal:

with what surprise they found that it actually worked so well that they felt justified in dropping their habit of taking the lives and property of their neighbours first and thinking over it afterwards. Not till the Tribunal of the League of Nations has had successes of conciliation, visible to all, will the armed individualist nations of to-day begin to rub their cynical and suspicious eyes, and to sprinkle their armour³³ with moth-powder. No one who, like myself, has recently experienced the sensation of landing in America after having lived in Europe throughout the war, can fail to realize the reluctance of Americans to commit themselves, and the difficulty Americans have in realizing the need for doing so. But may I remind Americans that during the first years of the war there was practically the same general American reluctance to interfere in an old-world struggle; and that in the end America found that it was not an old-world but a world struggle? It is entirely reasonable to dislike snatching chestnuts out of the fire for other people, and to shun departure from the letter of cherished tradition; but things do not stand still in this world; storm centres shift; and live doctrine often becomes dead dogma.

The League of Nations is but an incorporation of the co-operative principle in world affairs. We have seen to what the lack of that principle leads both in international and national life. Americans seem almost unanimously in favour of a League of Nations, so long as it is sufficiently airy—perhaps one might say “not-airy”; but when it comes to earth,³⁴ many of them fear the risk. I would only say that no great change ever comes about in the lives of

men unless they take risks; no progress can be made. As to the other objection taken to the League, not only by Americans—that it won't work—well, we shall never know the rights of that unless we try it. The two chief factors in avoiding war are Publicity and Delay. If there is some better plan for bringing these two factors into play than the machinery of a League of Nations, I have yet to learn of it. The League, which, I think, will come in spite of all our hesitations, may very likely make claims larger than its real powers; and there is, of course, danger in that; but there is also wisdom and advantage, for the success of the League must depend enormously on how far it succeeds in riveting the imaginations of mankind in its first years. The League should therefore make bold claims. After all, there is solidity and truth in this notion of a Society of Nations. The world is really growing towards it beneath all surface rivalries. We must admit it to be in the line of natural development, unless we turn our back on all analogy. Don't then let us be ashamed of it, as if it were a piece of unpractical idealism. It is much more truly real than the state of things which has led to the misery of these last four years. The soldiers who have fought and suffered and known the horrors of war, desire it. The objections come from those who have but watched them fight and suffer. Like every other change in the life of mankind, and like every new development in industry or art, the League needs faith. Let us have faith and give it a good "send-off".

I have left what I deem the greatest new factor till the last—Anglo-American unity. Greater it is even than the impetus towards a League of Nations, because without

it the League of Nations has surely not the chance of a lost dog.

I have been reading a Life of George Washington, which has filled me with admiration of your stand against our Junkers³⁵ of those days. And I am familiar with the way we outraged the sentiments³⁶ of both the North and the South, in the days of your Civil War. No wonder your history books were not precisely Anglophile, and that Americans grew up in a traditional dislike of Great Britain! I am realist enough to know that the past will not vanish like a ghost—just because we have fought side by side in this war; and realist enough to recognize the other elements which make for patches of hearty dislike between our peoples. But, surveying the whole field, I believe there are links and influences too strong for the disruptive forces; and I am sure that the first duty of English and American citizens to-day is to be fair and open to understanding about each other. If anyone will take down the map of the world and study it, he will see at once how that world is ballasted by the English-speaking countries; how, so long as they remain friends, holding as they do the trade routes and the main material resources of the world under their control, the world must needs sail on an even keel.³⁷ And if he will turn to the less visible chart of the world's mental qualities, he will find a certain reassuring identity of ideals between the various English-speaking races, which form a sort of guarantee of stable unity. Thirdly, in community of language we have a factor promoting unity of ethics, potent as blood itself; for community of language is ever unconsciously producing unity of traditions and

ideas. Americans and Britons, we are both, of course, very competitive peoples, and I suppose consider our respective nations the chosen people of the earth. That is a weakness which, though natural, is extremely silly, and merely proves that we have not yet outgrown provincialism. But competition is possible without reckless rivalry. There was once a bootmaker who put over his shop: "*Mens conscia recti*" ("A mind conscious of right"). He did quite well, till a rival bootmaker came along, established himself opposite, and put over *his* shop the words: "Men's, Women's, and Children's *conscia recti*", and did even better. The way nations try to cut each other's commercial throats is what makes the stars twinkle—that smile on the face of the heavens. It has the even more ruinous effect of making bad blood in the veins of the nations. Let us try playing the game of commerce like sportsmen, and respect each other's qualities and efforts. Sportsmanship has been rather ridiculed of late, yet I dare make the assertion that she will yet hold the field, both in your country and in mine; and if in our countries—then in the world.

It is ignorance of each other, not knowledge, which has always made us push each other off—the habit, you know, is almost endemic in strangers, so that they do it even in their sleep. There were once two travellers, a very large man and a very little man, strangers to each other, whom fate condemned to share a bed at an inn. In his sleep the big man stirred, and pushed the little man out on to the floor. The little man got up in silence, climbed carefully over the big man, who was still asleep, got his back against the wall and his feet firmly planted

against the small of the big man's back, gave a tremendous revengeful push and—pushed the bed away from the wall and fell down in between. Such is the unevenness of fate, and the result of taking things too seriously. America and England must not push each other out, even in their sleep, nor resent the unconscious shoves they give each other, too violently. Since we have been comrades in this war we have taken to speaking well of each other, even in public print. 'To cease doing that now will show that we spoke nicely of each other only because we were afraid of the consequences if we did not. Well, we both have a sense of humour.

But not only self-preservation and the fear of ridicule guard our friendship. We have, I hope, also the feeling that we stand, by geographical and political accident, trustees for the health and happiness of all mankind. The magnitude of this trust cannot be exaggerated, and I would wish that every American and British boy and girl could be brought up to reverence it—not to believe that they are there to whip creation. We are here to *serve* creation, that creation may be ever better all over the earth, and life more humane, more just, more free. The habit of being charitable to each other will grow if we give it a little chance. If we English-speaking peoples bear with each other's foibles, help each other over the stiles we come on, and keep the peace of the world, there is still hope that some day that world may come to be God's own.

Let us be just and tolerant; let us stand fast and stand together—for light and liberty, for humanity and Peace!

NOTES

1. *new factors*, as the result of the Great War.
2. *volunteers*, who had enlisted as soldiers before conscription.
3. *rattled at great speed*. Galsworthy is occasionally colloquial and idiomatic out of deference to the American audience he is addressing.
4. *old life of peace*. Students should examine this sentence as an example of the habit of using words in pairs.
5. *savour*, a reminiscence of Biblical language.
6. *American Civil War*, fought in the years 1861 to 1865 between the northern and southern states of America. Abraham Lincoln was President of U.S.A. during the Civil War.
7. *hope springs eternal*, a reminiscence of Pope.
8. *passion for justice*. Galsworthy had himself a passion for justice and wrote a play called *Justice*.
9. *come in very handy*. The author apologizes for his use of idiomatic expressions.
10. *armchair and inkpot*, the fireside critics.
11. *Hyde Park*, a large public park in the west of London.
12. *steer*, the author uses an expressive nautical metaphor.
13. *headmaster of my old school*, Dr. Butler, Headmaster of Harrow.
14. *bee in his bonnet*, i.e. mad; another colloquial and idiomatic expression which his American audience would appreciate.
15. *coiffed*, capped.
16. *the saying*, to be found in St. Matthew, chap. xix.
17. *The Goths*, one of the barbarian peoples who destroyed the civilization of the Roman Empire.
18. *Thiergarten*, a public park in Berlin with a number of statues.
19. *Sphinx*, a famous monument of the ancient Egyptians near Cairo. It is the habit of the uneducated tourist to carve or write his name on ancient monuments, thus achieving a cheap notoriety.
20. *over here*, in America.

21. *somebody once said*, Longfellow in the *Psalm of Life*.

22. *Master of Balliol*, the celebrated Dr. Jowett (1817-93).

23. *Sir Hiram Maxim*, an American engineer, who has worked for many years in England. He is known best as the inventor of the Maxim gun.

24. *the prophet*, the Preacher in the Book of Ecclesiastes, chap. i: "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity."

25. *stay dry*, keep to prohibition. A *cocktail* is a very potent short drink concocted by the Americans.

26. *speaking in the large*, speaking generally.

27. *backnumbered*, i.e. out of touch with modern realities; another idiomatic expression.

28. *the Guy*, since the 5th November, 1605, when Guido Fawkes tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament in London, it has been usual to burn an unpopular person in effigy.

29. *Bolshevism*, the type of communism adopted in Russia.

30. *vieux jeu*, out of date, old-fashioned.

31. *uncommonly like*, another rather colloquial expression.

32. *Neolithic Age*, round about 3000 B.C., when people used implements of stone, but polished and shaped them. Thus it is called the New Stone Age as contrasted with the earlier Palæolithic, or Old Stone Age.

33. *sprinkle their armour*. Galsworthy again defers to American taste in his idiomatic figure of speech

34. *comes to earth*, calls for definite acts; demands concrete action and not ideas only.

35. *our Junkers*, the English statesmen in the eighteenth century whose thoughtless diplomacy caused the American War of Independence.

36. *outraged the sentiments*, by thoughtless statements and actions in favour of one side or the other.

37. *sail on an even keel*, once more the nautical expression.

EXERCISES

1. What, according to Galsworthy, are the new factors in the post-war world?
2. Explain: Democracy is neither government by rabble, nor government by caucus.
3. What was the effect of the war, in Galsworthy's view, upon those who went through it?
4. Examine: Aristocracy should be the means and machinery by which democracy works itself out.
5. In whose hands lies the future of the world, according to the author?
6. Write an essay on "The Power of Report".
7. Discuss the author's "first necessity for improvement in modern life".
8. Discuss: The wise man takes time by the forelock.
9. "The League needs faith." Examine Galsworthy's point of view.
10. To what extent is community of language a factor in promoting unity of ethics?
11. Give some instances from this essay of: paradox, figurative language, idiomatic expressions, the use of nautical language.
12. Is Galsworthy a true prophet?
13. Write down your thoughts about his style, and compare it with Conrad's.

No. 18.—By Rivers and Streams

MICHAEL FAIRLESS

Michael Fairless is the pen-name of a charming lady essayist, Margaret Fairless Barber, who died in 1901. Born in Yorkshire, she lived abroad for a period. Ultimately she found a home in England with some friends, and adopted their name. Her health was very poor, but no evidence of it was permitted to intrude upon the pages of her fascinating nature studies and sketches such as *By Rivers and Streams*. Her chief volumes of sketches are called *The Roadmender*, *The Gathering of Brother Hilarius*, and *The Grey Brethren*.

Michael Fairless strikes a new note. An inspired lover of Nature, her thoughts lift her high above commonplace things into the domain of poetry, and her diction is attuned to the higher sphere. There is a vein of religious mysticism, which is interpreted in words which often have the sanctity of religious association.

Running water has a charm all its own; it proffers companionship of which one never tires, it adapts itself to moods; it is the guardian of secrets. It has cool draughts for the thirsty soul as well as for drooping flowers; and they who wander in the garden of God with listening ears learn of its many voices.

When the strain of a working day has left me weary, perhaps troubled and perplexed, I find my way to the river. I step into a boat and pull up stream until the exertion has refreshed me; and then I make fast to the

old alder-stump where last year the reed-piper nested, and lie back in the stern and think.

The water laps against the keel as the boat rocks gently in the current; the river flows past, strong and quiet. There are side eddies, of course, and little disturbing whirlpools near the big stones, but they are all gathered into the broad sweep of the stream and carried down to the great catholic sea.¹ And while I listen to the murmur of the water and watch its quiet strength² the day's wrinkles are smoothed out of my face; and at last the river bears me homewards rested and at peace.

There are long stretches of time for me when I must remain apart from the world of work, often unwilling, sometimes with a very sore heart. Then I turn my steps towards my friend and wander along the banks, a solitary not alone.³ In the quiet evening light I watch the stream "never hasting, never resting": the grass that grows beside it is always green, the flowers are fresh; it makes long embracing curves—I could cross from point to point in a minute, but to follow takes five. The ways of water are ways of healing; I have a companion who makes no mistakes, touches none of my tender spots.⁴

Presently I reach the silent pool, where the stream takes a wide sweep. Here the fair white water-lilies lie on their broad green leaves and wait for their lover the moon; for then they open their silvery leaves⁵ and bloom in the soft light fairer far than beneath the hot rays of the sun. Then, too, the buds rise out of the water and the moon kisses them into bloom and fragrance. Near by are the little yellow water-lilies, set for beauty against a background of great blue-eyed forget-me-nots and tall

feathery meadowsweet. The river still sweeps on its way, but the pool is undisturbed; it lies out of the current. They say it is very deep—no one knows quite how deep—and it has its hidden tragedy. I gaze down through the clear water, following the thick lily-stalks—a forest where solemn carp sail in and out, and perch chase each other through the maze—and beyond them I cannot see the bottom, the secret of its stillness; but I may watch the clouds mirrored on its surface, and the evening glow lying at my feet.

I think of the fathomless depths of the peace of God, fair with flowers of hope; of still places wrought in man; of mirrors that reflect, in light uncomprehended,⁶ the Image of the Holy Face.

I go home across the common, comforted, towards the little town where the red roofs lie glimmering in the evening shadows, and the old grey church stands out clear and distinct against the fading sky.

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One of the happiest memories of my childhood is the little brook in the home field. I know it was not a very clean little brook, it passed through an industrious manufacturing world—but to me then this mattered not at all.

Where it had its source I never found out; it came from a little cave in the side of the hill, and I remember that one of its banks was always higher than the other. I once sought to penetrate the cave, but with sad results in the shape of bed before dinner and no pudding,⁷ such small sympathy have one's elders with the spirit of research. Just beyond the cave the brook was quite a respectable width—even my big boy cousin fell into

mud and disgrace when he tried to jump it—and there was a gravelly beach, at least several inches square, where we launched our boats of hollowed elder-wood. Soon, however, it narrowed, it could even be stepped over; but it was still exciting and delightful, with two perilous rapids over which the boats had to be guided, and many boulders—for the brook was a brave stream, and had fashioned its bed in rocky soil. Farther down was our bridge, one flat stone dragged thither by really herculean efforts. It was unnecessary, but a triumph. A little below this outcome of our engineering skill the brook widened again before disappearing under a flagged tunnel ⁸ into the neighbouring field. Here, in the shallows, we built an aquarium. It was not altogether successful, because whenever it rained at all hard the beasts were washed out; but there was always joy in restocking it. Under one of the banks close by lived a fat frog for whom I felt great respect. We used to sit and gaze at each other in silent intercourse, until he became bored—I think I never did—and flopped into the water with a splash.

But it was the brook itself that was my chief and dearest companion. It chattered and sang to me, and told me ⁹ of the goblins who lived under the hill, of fairies dancing on the grass on moonlight nights, and scolding the pale lilac milkmaids on the rich banks; and of a sad little old man dressed in brown, always sad because his dear water-children ran away from him when they heard the voice of the great river telling them of the calling of the sea.

It spoke to me of other more wonderful things, not even

now to be put into words, things of the mysteries of a child's imagination; and these linger still in my life, and will linger, I think, until they are fulfilled.

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I have another friend—a Devonshire stream. I found it in spring when the fields along its banks were golden with Lent-lilies. I do not even know its name; it has its source up among the old grey tors,¹⁰ and doubtless in its beginning had a hard fight for existence. When it reaches the plain it is a good-sized stream, although nowhere navigable. I do not think it even turns a mill; it just flows along and waters the flowers. I have seen it with my bodily eyes only once; but it has left in my life a blessing, a picture of blue sky, yellow bells, and clear rippling water—and whispered secrets not forgotten.

All the Devonshire streams are full of life and strength. They chatter cheerily over stones, they toil bravely to shape out their bed. Some of them might tell horrible tales of the far-away past, of the worship of the false God when blood stained the clear waters; tales, too, of feud and warfare,¹¹ of grave council and martial gathering; and happy stories of fairy and pixy our eyes are too dull to see, and of queer little hillmen with foreign ways and terror of all human beings. Their banks are bright with tormentil,¹² blue with forget-me-not, rich in treasures of starry moss; the water is clear, cool in the hottest summer—they rise under the shadow of the everlasting hills,¹³ and their goal is the sea.

.

There are other times when I must leave the clean waters and the good brown earth, to live, for a while, in

London: and there I go on pilgrimage that I may listen to the river's voice.

I stand sometimes at a wharf where the ships are being unloaded of the riches of every country, of fruits of labour by my unknown brothers in strange lands; and the river speaks of citizenship in the great world of God, wherein all men have place, each man has his own place, and everyone should be neighbour to him who may have need.

I pass on to London Bridge, our Bridge of Sighs.¹⁴ How many of these my brethren¹⁵ have sought refuge in the cold grey arms of the river from something worse than death? What drove them to this dreadful resting-place? What spectre hurried them to the leap? These things, too, are my concern, the river says.

Life is very grim in London: it is not painted in the fair, glowing colours of grass and sky and trees, and shining streams that bring peace. It is drawn in hard black and white; but the voice of its dark waters must be heard all the same.

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I would not leave my rivers in the shadow. After all, this life is only a prelude, a beginning: we pass on to where "the rivers and streams make glad the city of God". But if we will not listen here, how shall we understand hereafter?

NOTES

1. *the great catholic sea*. Note the essayist's careful choice of the 'inevitable' adjective.

2. *its quiet strength*, a true description of a river.

3. *a solitary not alone*. Observe the love of the paradoxical.

4. *touches none of my tender spots*, does not worry, annoy, or irritate me in any way.

5. *silvery leaves*. Note throughout the essay the artist's love for the colour in Nature.

6. *light uncomprehended*, a vein of religious mysticism runs through the essay.

7. *bed before dinner and no pudding*, the punishment meted out to children who have misbehaved.

8. *a flagged tunnel*, a tunnel or culvert made of large flat stones.

9. *told me*, it told the authoress of dainty creatures suitable for her ethereal spirit.

10. *tors*, the rocky hill-tops in Dartmoor and Exmoor.

11. *tales of feud and warfare*, we are led naturally enough to think of Wordsworth's *Solitary Reaper*, of

"old unhappy far-off things,

And battles long ago."

12. *tormentil*, a trailing yellow-flowered plant.

13. *everlasting hills*, in this we have a reminiscence of the Bible.

14. *our Bridge of Sighs*, because London Bridge is a central feature of a huge city, full of sadness and misery, of human derelicts who sometimes are driven to suicide.

15. *my brethren*, because this essay is in the volume *Grey Brethren*.

EXERCISES

1. Show that this essayist's thoughts remain remote from mundane affairs.
2. Illustrate the artist's love of the colours of Nature in this essay.
3. Trace the vein of mysticism running through the essay.
4. Discuss: The ways of water are ways of healing.
5. Describe the streams beloved by the authoress.
6. Write an essay on "The Charm of a River's Companionship".
7. Discuss: The river speaks of citizenship in the great world of God.
8. "Michael Fairless is a poet." Discuss.

No. 19.—On Archæology

G. K. CHESTERTON

Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874–1936) was born in London, like Milton, and educated at Milton's school¹, St. Paul's. After studying art for some time he became a journalist, and his reputation as an essayist and critic of literary and social subjects is deservedly high. Among his volumes of essays are *Tremendous Trifles*, *A Shilling For My Thoughts*, *All Things Considered*, &c. He has written critical volumes on Browning and Dickens. His novels include *The Club of Queer Trades*, *The Man who was Thursday*, *The Flying Inn*, and the detective series with Father Brown as the central figure. In 1915 he issued a volume of poems, while the *Ballad of the White Horse* came earlier.

In this essay some of the well-known characteristics of Chesterton are clearly revealed; his earnestness, amounting sometimes to didacticism, but woven here and there with a thread of unexpected humour; his love of balance, antithesis and paradox, sometimes just a little tiring; his intimate acquaintance with literature; his fine vocabulary and mastery over words; and, above all, his cleverness. Chesterton is always very sure of himself.

There is a curious fable that the study of ancient stones has a petrifying effect on people. One of the figures in conventional fiction¹ is the archæological professor, who is always as dry as a parchment or as rigid as a hieroglyphic.² He is one of the most fictitious figures even in fiction. I do not know why it should be supposed that a man who studies mummies must himself be a mummy. We do

not insist that the hair of a botanist must be bright green, or that the complexion of every geologist must resemble old red sandstone.³ We do not expect an ornithologist to hop about flapping his two arms like wings. We do not expect a conchologist to curl up like a creature in a shell. Nor is there any reason why one studying old things should himself be old, or even why one who studies dead things should himself be dying. As a matter of fact, most of the men I have known who had a sort of passion for the past were particularly cheerful and vigorous. Being a practical excavator must mean being a practical adventurer, not ignorant of the toils or even the perils of travel. Scott, in the best of his novels, *The Antiquary*,⁴ showed his own shrewdness in making the investigator not only sturdy, but shrewd. Indeed, Mr. Oldbuck is a man of liberal and almost revolutionary sympathies; while his friend Sir Arthur Wardour is distinguished from him by being merely traditional or reactionary. The one old gentleman is an antiquary, and the other only an antiquity. I do not say that any antiquaries are infallible, any more than Mr. Oldbuck was infallible about Aiken Drum's Lang Ladle. But he was certainly lively and humorous, and all the more lively and humorous for having passed so many of his days among the dead.⁵

For there is here involved a larger matter, which is too little noted. We can see it best if we compare the old romances which the Antiquary studied—or, indeed, the old romance of the Antiquary himself—with a kind of new romance which has been rather typical of our time. I mean the romance about the future—often about the very remote future; and generally at least as strange

and spectral as the most remote past. Sometimes it is the description of a Utopia,⁶ or perfect state of society into which our social tendencies will evolve. It is not unfair to say that very few Utopian stories have anything that can be called fun in them. The approximate exceptions are More's *Utopia*, and the work of William Morris,⁷ with its fine irresponsible title of *News from Nowhere*. They are exceptions precisely because neither More nor Morris was really modern, and because Morris was rather more mediæval than More. But most futurist works have not even this amount of levity; and the reason is not unconnected with the real case for a study of the past.

We talk of the past as dead; but there is a very special and definite sense in which the past is always a living thing while the future is a dead thing. We know that the past has moved on living lines; but we can only conceive the future as moving on dead lines—that is, on mechanical lines. If we think the future calculable at all, we can only calculate it in a mathematical fashion, by averages and tendencies and consistent curves of change. We can guess the population will increase in such and such a proportion, or mortality in such and such a degree; but we cannot think about the marriages or murders of the future as we do about the marriages and murders of the past. We can guess that this or that invention will be further improved, or this or that route of travel further developed; that a tax will increase or a trade expand. Probably we guess wrong; but certainly we guess in round numbers. We cannot see the fascinating fractions into which the real working out of the sum

reduces the real number. It is always those vivid fractions—we might say those vulgar fractions—that we see in the past. It is the things left over, the things that do not fit, the things sprawling and struggling, that make the past so living a thing. That is why every prediction of the future, even by a genius like Mr. Wells,⁸ always looks like a long row of noughts. Our fathers were content to say that the future was x , or the unknown quantity. Our futurists are really content to prove that $x = 0$. The mathematical figure for nought is round and harmonious and symmetrical, and has a fine inevitable curve; but it is also hollow and blank—a face without features. In all these points it resembles the usual Utopian or pessimistic prediction about the human race. But history has not been merely a row of noughts. Religious history, at worst, has been a game of noughts and crosses.⁹

The future is dead, because all futurism must be a sort of fatalism. It cannot foresee the free part of human action; it can only foresee the servile part. It is not a question of whether the prediction is optimistic or pessimistic; it is a question of the nature of prediction itself. The line may go up or down, with the optimist or pessimist; the line may merely go round and round, with those who believe in recurrence and a wheel of fate. It may be progressive in the pattern of an ascending spiral or self-repeating in the pattern of the swing of a pendulum. But the point about all these patterns is that they must all be mathematical patterns. None of them can be like artistic pictures. The point of all these lines is that they must all be mathematical lines; none of them can be

free lines, like the lines of a draughtsman. It is only in the past that we find the finished picture; for it is only in the past that we find the free line. In other words, when we look at what men did, we are looking at what they freely chose to do. But when we consider what men will do, we cannot consider what they will choose to do. We can only consider what they must do. Unless it be something they cannot avoid, it is something we cannot predict. And so our prediction, whether it is true or not, will only be dealing with human society on its servile side. In so far as the next generation is free, it is free to frustrate our prophecy.

Now, the historic past is full of those free actions and frustrated prophecies. The future can only consist of things expected; it is only the past that consists of things that were entirely unexpected. Therefore history, and even archæology, is intrinsically surprising; because it is the study of a story of surprises. For instance, a man looking at the round wheels of modern machinery, and delighted to see the wheels go round, may make a more or less mechanical calculation of what more wheels, or bigger wheels, or swifter wheels, might be used for doing in the future. But a man looking at the round arches of old Roman and Norman architecture could not possibly have calculated from them that, a hundred years afterwards, the delicate energy of the Gothic¹⁰ would be piercing the sky with spires and pointed arches as if with spears and arrows. That was an act of free imagination and, properly understood, an act of free will. And even if nothing were left of the Gothic but a few grey ruins covered with moss and ivy, even if all the spires were

fallen and all the pointed arches broken, the study of them would still be an exciting study: because it would be the study of the intense excitement of an entirely new thing.

We cannot in that sense *predict* an entirely new thing. It would be to expect an unexpected thing. We cannot predict new things, because by hypothesis we can only calculate them logically from old things. We can stand in the present and project its lines further into the future; but we cannot stand in the future and project the new thing really native to the future. We may guess some of the fulfilments of a later generation; but we cannot share in any of its surprises. We may know a little about the heritage of our grandchildren, but nothing about their windfalls¹¹ or their wilder adventures. If we want windfalls and wild adventures, we must consider the ways of our grandfathers and not our grandchildren. If we want the wildest emotions of novelty and astonishment, we can only find them in mouldering stones and fading tapestries, in the museum of antiquities or the place of tombs.¹²

NOTES

1. *conventional fiction*, the ordinary modern novel.
2. *hieroglyphic*, the simile here combines humour with clearness.
3. *old red sandstone*. Chesterton is thinking of the work of Hugh Miller, the geologist (1802-56).
4. *The Antiquary*, one of Scott's Waverley Novels. Oldbuck is the antiquary, and Sir Arthur Wardour a rather pompous and family-proud Scottish baronet. The Lang Ladle refers to a humorous incident in the story, in which Oldbuck's antiquarian learning is made to look ridiculous.
5. *days among the dead*, a reminiscence of Southey's well-known poem *The Scholar*.

6. *Utopia*, from the Greek, meaning *no place*. Sir Thomas More, who lived in the time of King Henry VIII, and was beheaded by that monarch, wrote a Latin book about an island of that name with a perfect social and political system.

7. *Morris* (1834-96), a Victorian poet and artist who belonged to the Pre-Raphaelite school. His best-known work is *The Earthly Paradise*.

8. *Mr. Wells*, born in 1866, journalist and novelist. Wrote the following scientific romances: *The Invisible Man*, *The War of the Worlds*, *The Food of the Gods*. Later came the novels *Love and Mr. Lewisham*, *Kipps*, *The History of Mr. Polly*; followed by problem novels, such as *Tono-Bungay* and *The New Machiavelli*, and later still *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*. He has also written *A Short History of the World*.

9. *noughts and crosses*, a game played with noughts and crosses, the object being to get three of either in a row. Chesterton is hinting at the futility of all religious wars.

10. *Gothic*, referring to a style of architecture popular from the twelfth to the sixteenth century characterized by pointed arches and delicate spires. It is quite divorced from the *Gothic* which means barbarous.

11. *windfalls*, money coming to you by sheer good luck.

12. *place of tombs*, Chesterton ends on his characteristic note of paradox.

EXERCISES

1. Explain: (a) The past is always a living thing while the future is a dead thing. (b) The future can only consist of things expected; it is only the past that consists of things that were entirely unexpected.

2. Discuss: History is the study of a story of surprises.

3. Illustrate Chesterton's love of paradox.

4. Compare Chesterton's prose style with Galsworthy's.

5. What do we learn about Chesterton the Man from this essay?

6. Write a note on the study of archæology.

No. 20.—The Kitten

ROBERT LYND

Mr. Lynd, who is the literary editor of the *Daily News*, was born in 1879. In 1908 appeared sketches of Irish life, called *Portraits and Impressions*; *The Book of This and That* was published in 1915; *The Pleasures of Ignorance* in 1922; while *Idling* came in 1926.

He is an essay writer of great charm and fancy, and his work is personal and human. In his matter he is fond of nature study; and he presents his observations with lightness and humour, combined with a happy excellence in phrase-making and choice of words.

Every wise man loves his own cat, but even the foolish love other people's kittens.¹ All the cats that one has loved best have been full-grown—they have been animals whose careers one has followed almost from the cradle to the grave—and yet one feels a temporary affection for any kitten in the world as it scurries under the sofa, protrudes a questing head from beneath the valance² as though the room were an unexplored African jungle, reaches out a paw and withdraws suddenly into the darkness, throws itself on its back and engages in a sham fight with the valance, and, righting itself, bolts with demons pursuing it³ to the folds of the curtain at the window. Most of our affections are the result of long associations, but every one who sees a kitten falls in love at first sight.

I suppose we are sentimental in our attitude to all young animals—foals, calves, pigs a month old, chickens, and ducklings. Even the psycho-analysts cannot persuade us that these pretty neophytes ⁴ are as gross and dull as the elders of their species. A pig has at least a few weeks of innocence before it becomes a pig in the full sense of the word, and, if a chicken is not pure, then there is nothing pure on earth. At the same time, I think our affection for kittens is based on something else besides that vague sentiment of kindness we all feel in the presence of infancy and innocence. I am as fond of chickens as anyone, but there is a monotony in their behaviour that makes it impossible to watch them with interest for more than a short period. I am a sworn admirer of calves, but calves, despite the menus in the restaurants,⁵ have no brains and lack initiative. Every kitten, almost as soon as it has emerged from the primal darkness, becomes (save at meal hours) an independent being, able to amuse itself like a child, inventive, adventurous, eager.

It is the only animal that enjoys looking at things for the sheer pleasure of seeing them moving. Dangle a string before the eyes of a duckling, and, if there is no food at the end of it, it will show no interest. Throw a paper ball along the ground in presence of a young pig, and it will find it duller than *Euphues*.⁶ A puppy, to be sure, will run after a ball, but I do not think either a foal or a calf will, and even a puppy lacks the all-embracing curiosity of a kitten. A kitten alone among the animals enjoys the use of its eyes to the full. Take it into the garden, and it starts with excitement at the shadow of a cabbage-butterfly passing over the grass. The rose-leaf

stirring in the wind after the rain draws it like a magnet, and it approaches it stealthily, its eyes a-glitter with interest, and touches it tentatively with its paw, as though everything that moved must be investigated. It creeps along the godetias⁷ flattened by the rain, and, as each plant with the removal of its foot jumps upwards and swings like a pendulum, the kitten stays to look and wonder and perhaps to box timorously the vacillating flower. It cannot move a step in the garden without seeing something else moving—a privet-leaf,⁸ a blade of grass, a bird on the railings. If it settles down to sleep on the flagged path, an ant appears out of a crack and hurries earnestly on its errand, and the kitten sits up, with its ears forward and its head cocked sideways, studying the moving apparition, approaching it with a careful paw, backing from the ant as it returns as from an incoming tide, following the ant cautiously till it has reached the crack and putting its foot swiftly on the crack as the ant disappears, raising its foot hurriedly from the crack as the ant re-emerges, and never taking its eyes off the insect till it sees its mother's tail moving and stalks this as a still better plaything. In a few months it will be only a cat and will no longer be interested in the traffic of ants, refusing to bestir itself for anything smaller than a moth. To-day, even an ant is something that moves and is therefore worth looking at. It is a point of view that kittens share with the wisest—or, at least, the happiest—of mankind.

Perhaps it is because we have at our best a great deal in common with kittens that we cannot help liking them. We owe so much of our happiness to our alertness of

observation that we praise an extreme form of the same characteristic in the kitten. We, too, were born with a passion for looking at everything that moves. The baby, taken into its father's bed before breakfast, notices the movement of the eyelids over the eyes, stares in solemn wonder, and attempts to put its finger into an eye that is the scene of such miracles. One day, it will grow up and cease even to notice the winking of eyelids, unless it is a man of genius; but to-day, like all babies, it has a genius of observation denied to most of its elders. All through its childhood it retains this genius in however decreasing measure. In the nursery it can watch a rain-drop coursing down the window-pane as though it were the first rain-drop that had appeared in the world. It may be that all the secrets of life are contained in a single rain-drop; the child alone among us looks at it as though this might be so. As it grows older, the tiniest and muddiest rill of water holds it fascinated. It can be happy hour after hour standing on a bridge and throwing grasses or pieces of stick into the stream, and hurrying to the other side of the bridge to see them moving downstream on the moving surface of the water. All wheels in motion give it pleasure. There is much satisfaction to be got from observing the slow stumble of cart-wheels along an old country road, and the huge wheel of a water-mill is a spectacle to keep a child late for dinner. The swinging of the pendulum of a clock and the halting movements of the second-hand are something at which to stand and stare, and the never-resting flames of the fire make even an unimaginative child imaginative.

The superiority of the child to the grown man in

observation is shown in the greater interest it takes in the movements of such creatures as snails and caterpillars. I never knew a grown man who loved snails so much that he attempted to organize races between snails; but I have met a boy who did this, though not with great success. As for caterpillars, the majority of men and women regard them as little better than vermin: the child, however, sees in the caterpillar something that moves, however wrigglingly, and can watch its progress along a stalk with as much patience as the caterpillar's own. Many children, one has to admit, are afraid of spiders, earwigs, beetles and mice, but I do not believe this fear is natural. Here the poison of terror has been instilled into their ears by parents and nurses. The child, I am sure, if left to itself, would make friends with earwigs and would shout for joy at the sight of a mouse running across the floor. There is no living creature, not even a house-fly, that does not, as it moves, interest the young human being.

It was surely no accident that led mankind to choose a ball—the most easily moved of all things—as the instrument of so many of its games. Here is something which, as it is kicked or struck backwards and forwards, any healthy-blooded man can watch as eagerly as Galileo⁹ watched the heavenly bodies through his telescope. And, if a philosopher objected to his taking such extravagant pleasure in watching a tennis-ball or a cricket-ball or a football, he could only echo Galileo's noble remark on the loveliest of the planets, *Eppur si muove*. Many fine things have been said in praise of the earth, but none finer than that. Here, too, you have half the secret of the moon's

beauty. A moon that stood eternally still in the same place—that never, cautious as a thief, rose behind the hills or sped in its crescent infancy along the west after the setting sun—would be no more than an arc-lamp in the sky, and we should cease to notice its presence or, at least, its loveliness.¹⁰ The very stars move in procession, and, though we praise the North Star because it is fixed, we should praise it less if all the stars were fixed. Whether the sun is fixed or not I do not know; at least, it behaves as though it were not. Had it been so, Joshua¹¹ doubtless would have made it move—a finer miracle than he performed. As for our earth, which, with all its faults, is a kind of ball, if it were to cease to move, whole civilizations would perish. Hence, it is no wonder that ball-games play so important a part in the more intelligent continents. The ball is the symbol of everything that keeps us alive on a mobile earth under a mobile sun.

The child and the kitten are born with an instinctive sense of these things. They could not explain their love of everything that moves, but we can explain it for them. And, occasionally, we can even recapture something of their wise pleasures. We, too, know that the fall of a single leaf on a still autumn day can take our eyes from a book and make us forget the death of Cæsar.¹² That solitary leaf spiralling to the ground seems to have more life in it for the moment than all the rest of the visible world. A hedgehog crackling its way out of the undergrowth on a soundless night compels us to watch it as though the rest of creation were merely a setting for this one creature. One can remember the scene in which a snake fluctuated¹³ sideways into the secrecy of the brambles, long after one

has forgotten the Greek conjugations. As for ants, when they go about their business, they can bring interest even into the flat world of flagstones. Those great bladders that they hoist out of the cracks, and tug and pull across the stones, with other ants eager to help arriving and pushing in the opposite direction, are to me a mystery, but I can sit beside the kitten and watch them as though I were watching the building of the Pyramids. The ant has, so far as I know, no real virtue except that it moves, and no one would think of keeping a dead ant in a glass case; but while it moves it is as interesting as a star. The spider, again, while it remains still on the ceiling, is uninteresting except to those who fear it: let it begin to lower itself on its thread, however, and then return to the ceiling to fight its own shadow cast by the electric light, and, whether you are reading Shakespeare or a detective story, you can read no more for half an hour. Thus, at least, it was with me the other night when a spider suddenly began fighting its shadow. It chased the shadow across the ceiling, fought it leg by leg, dropped an inch and shook itself like an angry golliwog, returned to the fight, suddenly lowered itself to the floor with arms outspread like a ballet-dancer let down from the flies of a theatre,¹⁴ lay on its back and climbed up its thread to the ceiling again, grappled with its shadow, and so on till it was time for bed. I forget what the book was that I was reading, but I do not forget the spider. I could not have taken my eyes off him to read about Cleopatra.¹⁵ And, as I went to bed, I reflected: "How happy is the kitten that has nothing to do but watch such things all day!"

NOTES

1. Note the balanced construction of this opening sentence.
2. *valance*, short curtain hanging down round the frame of the sofa.
3. *with demons pursuing it*, an example of the author's playful humour.
4. *neophytes*, usually a novice in a religious order; here a beginner in life. A charming misuse of the word.
5. *despite the menus*, because calves' brains constitute a popular dish.
6. *Euphues*, by John Lyly, an Elizabethan writer. The style in which it is written, and the matter, make it very dull reading.
7. *godetia*, a free-flowering hardy annual.
8. *privet-leaf*, the leaf of a white-flowered evergreen used for hedges.
9. *Galileo*, born in 1564, the same year as Shakespeare; died 1642. He was a celebrated astronomer and philosopher. His advocacy of the Copernican theory brought him into conflict with the Church. He was compelled to recant; and the story goes that as he recanted he uttered the famous *Eppur Si Muove* (yet it (the earth) moves).
10. Notice the beautiful ideas and the poetical diction of this fine sentence.
11. *Joshua*, Jewish leader, who made the sun stand still. See *Joshua*, chapter x:
 "And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies."
12. *death of Cæsar*, which we study in our lesson-books.
13. *a snake fluctuated*. Note again the choice of the word.
14. *flies of a theatre*, the space over the stage.
15. *Cleopatra*, Queen of Egypt, one of the most fascinating women of history.

EXERCISES

1. Select some examples of the author's happy gift of phrase-making.

2. Illustrate his use of apt similes.

3. Discuss the intrusion of the human and personal in the Essay.

4. Write a note on Nature Study, referring particularly to the essays by Hulson, Michael Fairless, and Robert Lynd.

5. Discuss: We owe much of our happiness to our alertness of observation.

Do you agree that the child is superior to the grown-up in this respect?

6. Explain: The flames of the fire make even an unimaginative child imaginative.

The ball is the symbol of everything that keeps us alive.

7. What is "half the secret of the moon's beauty"? Explain.

8. "Robert Lynd is fond of fanciful flights." Illustrate.

No. 21.—Noises

ROBERT LYND

Yet once more we are in the thick of a campaign against noises. Dr. Horton ¹ has been attacking the motorists who disturb his Sunday services by making the various noises within the gamut ² of motor-cars and motor-bicycles as they hurry past, and Sir Walter de Frece ³ has been calling for the cessation of the inferno, due to similar causes, on the Brighton front. The sense of hearing must surely be the most intolerant of all the senses, for among the letters of complaint that are a perpetually interesting feature of the newspapers, there must be at least three protesting against outrages on the ear for one that protests against outrages on the eye. Men are apparently more infuriated by what they hear than by what they see. Only a very sensitive man is kept awake at night by the unsightliness of modern life, but thousands lie awake cursing the noisiness of modern life. And there seems to be no cure for this noisiness. Banish one noise, and you only make room for another. Almost the only thing that the inventors cannot invent is silence. They have, if we may trust the writers of detective stories, invented silencers for revolvers; they have invented silencers for motor-cars. But they have never been able to invent a silencer for streets. They give us wooden pavements and asphalt to muffle the noise of wheels,

and, even before the days of motor-cars, they gave us pneumatic tyres that made hansom-cabs so silent that, for the safety of the public, the horses had to make a new kind of noise with bells on their harness. But, with all their inventions for the comfort of civilized men and women, they have left us a world that is fuller of unpleasant noises than it has ever been in history.

And the rest of us are as helpless as the inventors. We have put down noise after noise only to find that the noise that remains is greater than ever. You would have imagined that London would become a great deal quieter as a result of the order forbidding whistling for taxi-cabs,⁴ but we look back on London of the whistles as a quieter place than the London of to-day.⁵ Similarly you would have thought that the prohibition of barrel-organs⁶ in many districts would have lessened the general din, but what are a few barrel-organs amid the uproar of London? We are told that in the old days the dustmen carried huge bells which they rang almost incessantly, and that, before pillar-boxes were set up, postmen stood at the street-corners and rang bells so loudly that people might bring out their letters to them. We have suppressed these nuisances, but we have suppressed them in vain. Certain suburban districts may be quieter than they used to be, though even that is doubtful; but I am sure the busier parts of the towns are noisier. And it is not merely that the noises have grown louder: they have also grown more nerve-wracking and hideous.

Certainly, I look back without detestation to the noises of thirty or forty years ago. The noises made both by nature and by the inventions of man were all but equally

agreeable to the imagination. As for the noises of nature, there have been people who disliked the noise of the sea, and who could not even sleep in its neighbourhood; but to me there was nothing more lulling and delightful than the continuous bursting of waves on a long shore. I am not sure whether we should like the noise of waves so much if it were made, not by waves, but by a machine. So much of our pleasure is due to association that it is quite possible that, if the sea made a noise like a motor-horn, and if motor-horns made a noise like a breaking wave, we should praise the sea for making a noise that we should think intolerable in the motor-horn. It may have been because of the pleasures of association that, whenever I spent a month in a house overlooking a harbour, I was ravished not only by every sound made by the sea itself but by every sound made in the harbour. I loved the rattle of pulleys as the ships were being unloaded, the puffing of engines and the rumble of railway trucks on the line that connected the harbour with the station, the flapping of sails and the squeaking of cordage in the wind, the screaming of gulls, the lapping of water among the rocks and under the boats, the yelling of railwaymen, I liked all the noises of the place both collectively and individually, and no sight or sound or smell could, except by a miracle, have given me anything but pleasure in such surroundings. The very squeaking and clanging of the little iron gate through which people passed in order to cross the railway-line charmed the ear. There must have been a continuous succession of noises in the place, but they were noises that produced an impression of all-pervading peace.⁷

It is the same, I imagine, with most country noises. They melt and merge into the general peace of nature. Our imaginations tolerate them because we associate them with the peace of fields under the sun and the stars. We hear them not merely with our ears but with our minds. The hooting of the owls does not disturb us, because they too are inhabitants of the universal peace of the countryside. Yet, if exactly the same noise as the owls make were made by motor-horns, we should vibrate with hostility as it punctuated⁸ the night hours, and should write to the paper protesting that the din made it impossible to sleep. Remove the noises made by birds from the country to the town, and you will be surprised to find how, as soon as they have lost their associations with rural peace, they begin to be resented as disturbers of urban peace. About twenty years ago a coachman living near Portland Place⁹ was summoned for keeping a thrush that was a serious nuisance to his neighbours because of its continual singing. A Harley Street surgeon, giving evidence in court, declared that the thrush's singing interfered with his work, and that he had had to change his consulting-room because of it. It had, he declared, "a singularly rasping, raucous tone. He had never heard a thrush like it before." The proprietress of a nursing home also gave evidence that the thrush made "a shrill, screeching noise". I doubt, however, if the most melodious thrush in the world, singing from a cage in a London street, would have seemed melodious to these witnesses. Several witnesses on the other side, indeed, warmly defended the thrush's musical character. A bootmaker declared that it "sang in a joyful and exhilarating way".

A veterinary surgeon testified that "it sang beautifully and was a source of great pleasure to himself and family". And the coachman's mistress spoke of it as a bird to which she could listen all day. Obviously, these conflicting witnesses heard the bird not with different kinds of ears but with different imaginations.¹⁰ The one group heard in the thrush's song only one more addition to the noises of the town. To the other group the town became the country as they listened to the bird, as Cheapside was transformed by a thrush's song in Wordsworth's poem.¹¹ I myself, I think, should have been with those who regarded the thrush as a nuisance. Apart altogether from the objection to the caging of wild birds, one cannot help realizing that one can have too much even of the song of a thrush, and that a cage, by keeping it perpetually in the same place, prevents that coming and going which in nature brings constant variety in the day. In a country garden, every day in June is a day of surprises, with some change in the song or in the order and multitude of the songs. Our enjoyment of the song of the bird is the greater because it is beyond our control, and may cease just as we are longing for it to go on for ever. The song of a caged bird, however, goes on so long that we become critical and exasperated. I am sure the canary would give infinitely more pleasure with its song if it were a fleeting and uncontrolled visitor to the bushes in the garden, and nearly always flew away before we had time to get tired of it. A caged canary seems to many people only a monotonous machine of song. We do not associate it with the freedom and peace of the country, and so its song does not move our imaginations as the song of the

nightingale or the willow-wren does. It seems, in most of our moods, simply a noise, as the song of the willow-wren itself would do if the willow-wren were a prisoner in the garden.

I fancy the townsman's objection to the crowing of cocks is also due to the fact that he hears it in his imagination, not as a country noise, but as a town noise. There are people living in the country who are disturbed by crowing cocks in the small hours, but they are for the most part townsmen who have migrated to the country. I am sure that there is nothing essentially unpleasant to the ear of man in the crowing of cocks. The very name, *chanticleer*, suggests that human beings loved the sound of cock-crowing till cocks were imported into towns. I do not think the bird has many enemies among the poets, and yet to the ear of the townsman the crowing of a cock in the small hours is scarcely less maddening than the sound of an electric drill.¹² Some years ago a London magistrate declared from the bench that "Nothing more deadly or destructive to health and nerves can well be conceived than this perpetual cock-crowing". If this were true, with what nervous wrecks of men and women would the countryside of England be strewn! But, of course, it is not true. It is only the townsman's intolerance of the addition of yet more noises of town that makes him speak ill of the noble music of *chanticleer*. It is his urban nerves, not the notes of the bird, that are at fault. I doubt, indeed, whether man in a state of nature has any particular dislike of noise. The natural man, when he is young, loves to make a noise, whether by kicking a tin can or drawing a stick along railings. Some of his primitive

instruments of music, such as drums, show how much he loves noise for the sake of noise. Italians and Frenchmen, living nearer the sunshine than ourselves, take pleasure even in the noises made by machinery, and rejoice in producing the maximum instead of the minimum of noise with their motor-cars. There is a kind of Wagnerian music¹³ in the traffic of Rome and of Nice.¹⁴ In Florence, the deliberate cracking of whips by the mule-drivers is like the noise of a battle. Perhaps, if we of the northern nations could persuade ourselves that the hatred of noise is not natural, and that there is no noise so ear-splitting that it cannot be enjoyed by those who can enjoy noise, we should end, not only by becoming reconciled to electric drills, motor-horns, grinding brakes, barrel-organs, barking dogs, gramophones at open windows, and shouting newsboys, but by getting positively to like them. We cannot get rid of noise in any case, so that we may as well learn to enjoy it. There are, by all accounts, worse things than noises in Hell, though, to hear a neurotic townsman talking, you would not think so. In order to think well of noise, indeed, one has only to imagine what a modern city would be if all noise were totally abolished—if soundless motor-cars sped through silent streets, if our feet made no sound on the pavements as we walked, if builders put up houses amid a silence as of the dead, if nothing that moved made a sound, and men, horses and birds went about their business as silent as moths. No continuous chorus of motor-horns or crowing cocks could be so “destructive to health and nerves” as so still and universal a silence. After a week of it we should weep tears of joy if all the

dogs suddenly began to bark again and all the sirens in the docks and factories to make a hideous hooting.¹⁵

NOTES

1. *Dr. Horton*, a celebrated Nonconformist preacher.
2. *the gamut*, the complete scale of recognized musical notes.
3. *Sir Walter de Frece*, Brighton magistrate, and husband of the celebrated actress Vesta Tilley.
4. *whistling for taxi-cabs*, blowing a shrill whistle from the doorway of house, theatre, or restaurant, to summon a taxi-cab.
5. *the London of to-day*. In more recent years some diminution in street noises has been achieved by the re-organization of traffic, one-way streets, Belisha crossings, and non-sounding of motor-horns.
6. *barrel-organs*, raucous musical-boxes on wheels played by itinerant Italians with or without a monkey.
7. *all-pervading peace*. Note in this sentence the effect of surprise and paradox.
8. *punctuated*, sounded at recurring intervals.
9. *Portland Place, Harley Street*, residential streets in western London; the latter famous for its doctors and specialists.
10. *with different imaginations*, e.g. the poet Browning's in "Home Thoughts From Abroad".
- " That's the wise thrush, he sings each song twice over,
 Lest you should think he never could recapture
 The first fine careless rapture!"
11. Wordsworth's poem "The Reverie of Poor Susan".
- " Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
 In the silence of morning the song of the bird.
 'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees
 A mountain ascending, a vision of trees,
 Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
 And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside."
- Cheapside*, a busy commercial street towards the east of London.

12. *an electric drill*, a hideously noisy machine for breaking up city streets with a view to their repair.

13. *Wagnerian music*, full-sounding music, such as was composed by the celebrated German composer Richard Wagner (1813-83), a native of Leipsic. Some of his best-known operas are: *Lohengrin*, *Tannhauser*, *The Meistersingers*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *The Niebelungen Ring*.

14. *Nice*, a town in the south of France, on the beautiful sea coast of the Mediterranean known as the Riviera.

15. The author ends his essay cleverly on an unexpected note.

EXERCISES

1. Explain and discuss: Much of our pleasure is due to association.

2. Write an essay on: The general peace of Nature.

3. Expand: Our enjoyment of the song of the bird is the greater because it is beyond our control.

4. What has the author to say of "The noble music of chanicleer"?

5. "Natural man loves to make a noise." Discuss and illustrate.

6. What would be the effect upon mankind 'if all noise were totally abolished'?

7. Calculate the effect of surprise, of the unexpected, in the essays by Lucas, Chesterton, and Lynd

No. 22.—The Sun and the Brook

RICHARD JEFFERIES

Richard Jefferies was born at Swindon in 1848, and he died in 1887. His first literary work was written for *Fraser's Magazine* in 1873. Then appeared *The Gamekeeper at Home* (1878), *The Story of My Heart* (1883), *Life in the Fields* (1884), *Amaryllis at the Fair* in the same year: and, finally, *The Open Air*.

Jefferies was an observer of the fields; he deciphered the pages of Nature: the Nature of Shelley, unassociated with mankind. He had, in addition, a sound knowledge of literature. The result is a new note in the essay. He is poetical and imaginative: the thought is elevated: there is an entire absence of all that is mean, common, worldly. We move upon a loftier plane. More than this, the belief in a beneficent Creator is behind every sentence he writes. He is as truly a mystic as Michael Fairless; but in another sense. Our author's thoughts here are frequently beautiful; so that the essay has been described as 'a pastoral idyl'; and the language is in keeping. His diction is chaste, his choice of words delicately artistic, and he colours his ideas with appropriate figures of speech. On occasion his words attune themselves to the rhythmical swing of the poet. The whole thing is light as gossamer, ethereal, intangible, dainty; and with Wordsworth's message open for the seeker to find.

The sun first sees the brook in the meadow where some roach¹ swim under a bulging root of ash. Leaning against the tree, and looking down into the water, there is a picture of the sky. Its brightness hides the sandy floor

of the stream as a picture conceals the wall where it hangs, but, as if the water cooled the rays, the eye can bear to gaze on the image of the sun.² Over its circle thin threads of summer cloud are drawn; it is only the reflection, yet the sun seems closer seen in the brook, more to do with us, like the grass, and the tree, and the flowing stream.³ In the sky it is so far, it cannot be approached, nor even gazed at, so that by the very virtue and power of its own brilliance it forces us to ignore and almost forget it. The summer days go on, and no one notices the sun. The sweet water slipping past the green flags,⁴ with every now and then a rushing sound of eager haste, receives the sky, and it becomes a part of the earth and of life. No one can see his own face without a glass; no one can sit down and deliberately think of the soul till it appears a visible thing. It eludes—the mind cannot grasp it. But hold a flower in the hand—a rose, this later honeysuckle,⁵ or this the first harebell—and in its beauty you can recognize your own soul reflected as the sun in the brook. For the soul finds itself in beautiful things.⁶

Between the bulging root and the bank there is a tiny oval pool, on the surface of which the light does not fall. There the eye can see deep down into the stream, which scarcely moves in the hollow it has worn for itself as its weight swings into the concave of the bend. The hollow is illuminated by the light which sinks through the stream outside the root; and beneath, in the first depth, five or six roach face the current. Every now and then a tiny curl appears on the surface inside the root, and must rise up to come there. Unwinding as it goes, its

raised edge lowers and becomes lost in the level. Dark moss on the base of the ash darkens the water under.⁷ The light green leaves overhead yield gently to the passing air; there are but few leaves on the tree, and these scarcely make a shadow on the grass beyond that of the trunk. As the branch swings, the gnats are driven farther away to avoid it. Over the verge of the bank, bending down almost to the root in the water, droop the heavily seeded heads of tall grasses which, growing there, have escaped the scythe.

These are the days of the convolvulus,⁸ of ripening berry, and dropping nut. In the gateways, ears of wheat hang from the hawthorn boughs, which seized them from the passing load.⁹ The broad aftermath¹⁰ is without flowers; the flowers are gone to the uplands and the untilled wastes. Curving opposite the south, the hollow side of the brook has received the sunlight like a silvered speculum¹¹ every day that the sun has shone. Since the first violet of the meadow, till now that the berries are ripening, through all the long drama of the summer, the rays have visited the stream. The long, loving touch of the sun has left some of its own mystic attraction in the brook. Resting here, and gazing down into it, thoughts and dreams come flowing as the water flows. Thoughts without words, mobile like the stream, nothing compact that can be grasped and stayed: dreams that slip silently as water slips through the fingers. The grass is not grass alone; the leaves of the ash above are not leaves only. From tree, and earth, and soft air moving,¹² there comes an invisible touch which arranges the senses to its waves as the ripples of the lake set the sand in parallel lines. The

grass sways and fans the reposing mind; the leaves sway and stroke it, till it can feel beyond itself and with them, using each grass blade, each leaf, to abstract life from earth and ether. These then become new organs, fresh nerves and veins running afar out into the field, along the winding brook, up through the leaves, bringing a larger existence. The arms of the mind open wide to the broad sky.

Some sense of the meaning of the grass, and leaves of the tree, and sweet waters hovers on the confines of thought, and seems ready to be resolved into definite form. There is a meaning in these things, a meaning in all that exists, and it comes near to declare itself. Not yet, not fully, nor in such shape that it may be formulated—if ever it will be—but sufficiently so to leave, as it were, an unwritten impression that will remain when the glamour is gone, and grass is but grass, and a tree a tree.

NOTES

1. *roach*, small freshwater fish.

2. *the image of the sun*, giving the idea of the essay. We cannot gaze direct at the sun in the sky, but we can examine clearly its reflection in the crystal waters of the brook. The sun comes nearer to us; it is a part of our world, something tangible, less remote, belonging to us.

3. *like the grass*, &c. Note the anapæstic rhythm of this clause.

4. *the green flags*, plants, such as the iris, with bladed leaf, which grow in moist ground.

5. *honeysuckle*. It is clear that the author, a lover of flowers, holds it in his hand as he writes.

6. *the soul finds itself in beautiful things*, there is a new depth of beautiful thought here.

7. *darkens the water under*. Note the close observation of Nature.

8. *convolvulus*, the flower of a slender twining plant, often called bindweed.

9. *the passing load*, as the farm wagon, with the harvest heaped high upon it, passes the hawthorn hedge, the prickly branches seize some of the long stalks.

10. *aftermath*, corn which grows in the wheat field after the first crop has been reaped.

11. *speculum*, a mirror or reflector, usually made of a bright metal.

12. *soft air moving*, this is the prose of a poet.

EXERCISES

1. Illustrate the author's close observation of the sights and colours in Nature.

2. Discuss the central idea, that 'association with Nature gives us a knowledge of our soul'.

3. Explain: *The soul finds itself in beautiful things*.

4. Give examples of the wealth of figurative language in this essay.

5. Is it true to say that the author has the soul of a poet?

6. Explain: *The arms of the mind open wide to the broad sky*.

7. Write an essay on: *There is a meaning in all that exists*.

8. Discuss: Richard Jefferies says nothing mean or common.

9. Do you think the description of this essay as 'A pastoral idyl' appropriate?

10. 'Full of perfumed fragrance.' Explain and illustrate.

11. Compare Michael Fairless and Richard Jefferies as lovers of Nature.

12. Explain: *The prose of this essay is the prose of a poet*.

No. 23.—On a Vanished Garden

ALPHA OF THE PLOUGH

Alfred George Gardiner, journalist and writer, was born in 1865. His chief works are: *Prophets, Priests and Kings, Pillars of Society, The War Lords, Life of Sir William Harcourt, Life of George Cadbury, &c.*; beside collections of essays, such as *Pebbles on the Shore, Leaves in the Wind, Windfalls*, and *Many Furrows*, written under the pen-name of "Alpha of the Plough". He chose the name when he was asked by the editor of the *Star* to contribute weekly essays to that paper. "There at the head of the Plough," he writes, "flames the great star that points to the pole. I will hitch my little wagon to that sublime image. I will be Alpha of the Plough."

As one critic has said, these essays "are sweet morsels of writing. Alpha has been compared with Elia, more aptly perhaps he might be compared with Stevenson, and yet why make any comparison at all? It is surely enough to have an essayist so human, so easy, so friendly as Alpha." He has personality and humour, a background of literature, depth and thoughtfulness, and he has polished his art to perfection.

I was walking with a friend along the Spaniards Road ¹ the other evening, talking on the inexhaustible theme ² of these days, when he asked: "What is the biggest thing that has happened to this country as the outcome of the war?"

"It is within two or three hundred yards from here," I replied. "Come this way and I'll show it to you."

He seemed a little surprised, but accompanied me cheerfully enough, as I turned from the road and led him through the gorse and the trees towards Parliament Fields,³ until we came upon a large expanse of allotments, carved out of the great playground, and alive with figures, men, women, and children, some earthing up potatoes, some weeding onion beds, some thinning out carrots, some merely walking along the patches and looking at the fruits of their labour springing from the soil. "There," I said, "is the most important result of the war."

He laughed, but not contemptuously. He knew what I meant, and I think he more than half agreed.

And I think you will agree, too, if you will consider what that stretch of allotments means. It is the symptom of the most important revival, the greatest spiritual awakening this country has seen for generations. Wherever you go that symptom meets you. Here in Hampstead⁴ allotments are as plentiful as blackberries in autumn. A friend of mine who lives in Beckenham⁵ tells me there are fifteen hundred in his parish. In the neighbourhood of London there must be many thousands. In the country as a whole there must be hundreds of thousands. If dear old Joseph Fels could revisit the glimpses of the moon⁶ and see what is happening, see the vacant lots and waste spaces bursting into onion beds and potato patches, what joy would be his! He was the forerunner of the revival, the passionate pilgrim of the Vacant Lot; but his hot gospel⁷ fell on deaf ears, and he died just before the trumpet of war awakened the sleeper.⁸

Do not suppose that the greatness of this thing that is happening can be measured in terms of food. That is

important, but it is not the most important thing. The allotment movement will add appreciably to our food supplies, but it will add far more to the spiritual resources of the nation. It is the beginning of a war on the disease that is blighting our people. What is wrong with us? What is the source of our social and spiritual ailment? Is it not the divorce of the people from the soil? For generations the wholesome red blood of the country has been sucked into the great towns, and we have seen grow up a vast machine of industry that has made slaves of us, shut out the light of the fields from our lives, left our children to grow like weeds in the slums, rootless and waterless, poisoned the healthy instincts of nature implanted in us, and put in their place the rank growths of the streets. Can you walk through a London working-class district or a Lancashire cotton town, with their huddle of airless streets, without a feeling of despair coming over you at the sense of this enormous perversion of life into the arid channels of death? Can you take pride in an Empire on which the sun never sets when you think of the courts in which, as Will Crooks⁹ says, the sun never rises?

And now the sun is going to rise. We have started a revolution that will not end until the breath of the earth has come back to the soul of the people. The tyranny of the machine is going to be broken. The dead hand is going to be lifted from the land. Yes, you say, but these people that I see working on the allotments are not the people from the courts and the slums; but professional men, the superior artisan, and so on. That is true. But the movement must get hold of the *intelligenza*¹⁰ first.

The important thing is that the breach in the prison is made: the fresh air is filtering in; the idea is born—not still-born, but born a living thing. It is a way of salvation that will not be lost, and that all will traverse.

This is not mere dithyrambic enthusiasm.¹¹ Take a man out of the street and put him in a garden, and you have made a new creature of him. I have seen the miracle again and again. I know a bus conductor, for example, outwardly the most ordinary of his kind. But one night I touched the key of his soul, mentioned allotments, and discovered that this man was going about his daily work irradiated by the thought of his garden triumphs. He had got a new purpose in life. He had got the spirit of the earth in his bones. It is not only the humanizing influence of the garden, it is its democratizing influence too.

When Adam delved and Eve span,
Where was then the gentleman?¹²

You can get on terms with anybody if you will discuss gardens. I know a distinguished public servant and scholar whose allotment is next to that of a bricklayer. They have become fast friends, and the bricklayer, being the better man at the job, has unconsciously assumed the rôle of a kindly master encouraging a well-meaning but not very competent pupil.

And think of the cleansing influence of all this. Light and air and labour—these are the medicines not of the body only, but of the soul. It is not ponderable things alone that are found in gardens, but the great wonder of life, the peace of nature, the influences of sunsets and

seasons and of all the intangible things to which we can give no name, not because they are small, but because they are outside the compass of our speech. In the great legend of the Fall the spiritual disaster of Man is symbolized by his exclusion from a garden, and the moral tragedy of modern industrialism is only the repetition of that ancient fable. Man lost his garden, and with it that tranquillity of soul that is found in gardens. He must find his way back to Eden if he is to recover his spiritual heritage, and though Eden is but a twenty-pole allotment, in the midst of a hundred other twenty-pole allotments, he will find it as full of wonder and refreshment as the garden of Epicurus.¹³ He will not find much help from the God that Mr. Wells¹⁴ has discovered, or invented, but the God that dwells in gardens is sufficient for all our needs—let the theologians say what they will.

Not God in gardens? When the eve is cool?

Nay, but I have a sign—

'Tis very sure God walks in mine.¹⁵

No one who has been a child in a garden will doubt the sign, or lose its impress through all his days. I know, for I was once a child whose world was a garden.

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It lay a mile away from the little country town, shut out from the road by a noble hedge, so high that even Jim Berry, the giant coal-heaver, the wonder and the terror of my childhood, could not see over, so thick that no eye could peer through. It was a garden of plenty, but also a garden of the fancy, with neglected corners, rich in tangled growths and full of romantic possibilities. It

was in this wilder terrain that I had found the hedgehog, here too, had seen the glow-worm's delicate light, and here, with my brain excited by *The Story of the Hundred Days*,¹⁶ that I knew the Frenchmen lurked in ambush while I at the head of my gallant troop of the Black Watch¹⁷ was careering with magnificent courage across the open country where the potatoes and the rhubarb and the celery grew.

It was ever the Black Watch. Something in the name thrilled me. And when one day I packed a little handbag with a nightgown and started out to the town where the railway station was, it was to Scotland I was bound and the Black Watch in which I meant to enlist. It occurred to me on the road that I needed money and I returned gravely and asked my mother for half a crown. She was a practical woman and brought me back to the prose of things with arguments suitable to a very youthful mind.

The side windows of the house commanded the whole length of the garden to where at the end stood the pump whence issued delicious ice-cold water brought up from a well so deep that you could imagine Australia to be not far from the bottom.

If only I could get to Australia! I knew it lay there under my feet with people walking along head downwards and kangaroos hopping about with their young in their pockets. It was merely a question of digging to get there. I chose a sequestered corner and worked all a summer morning with a heavy spade in the fury of this high emprise,¹⁸ but I only got the length of the spade on the journey and retired from the task with a sense of the bitter futility of life.

Never was there a garden more rich in fruit. Around the western wall of the house was trained a noble pear tree that flung its arms with engaging confidence right up to my bedroom window. They were hard pears that ripened only in keeping, and at Christmas melted rich and luscious in the mouth. They were kept locked up in the tool-shed, but love laughs at locksmiths, and my brother found it possible to remove the lock without unlocking it by tearing out the whole staple from its socket. My father was greatly puzzled by the tendency of the pears to diminish, but he was a kindly, unsuspecting man who made no disagreeable inquiries.

Over the tool-shed grew a grape vine. The roof of the shed was accessible by a filbert tree, the first of half a dozen that lined the garden on the side remote from the road. On sunny days there was no pleasanter place to lie than the top of the shed, with the grapes, small but pleasant to the thirsty palate, ripening thick around you. A point in favour of the spot was that it was visible from no window. One could lie there and eat the fruit without annoying interruptions.¹⁹

Equally retired was the little grass-grown path that branched off from the central gravelled path which divided the vegetable from the fruit garden. Here, by stooping down, one was hidden from prying eyes that looked from the windows by the thick rows of gooseberry bushes and raspberry canes that lined the path. It was my favourite spot, for there grew a delicious gooseberry that I counted above all gooseberries, small and hairy and yellow, with a delicate flavour that is as vivid to-day as if the forty years that lie between now and then were but

a day. By this path, too, grew the greengage trees. With caution, one could safely sample the fruit, and at the worst one was sure to find some windfalls among the strawberry beds beyond the gooseberry bushes.

I loved that little grass-grown path for its seclusion as well as for its fruit. Here, with *Monte Cristo*²⁰ or *Here-ward the Wake*, or *The Yellow Frigate*, or a drawing-board, one could forget the tyrannies of school and all the buffets of the world. Here was the place to take one's griefs. Here it was that I wept hot tears at the news of Landseer's death—Landseer,²¹ the god of my young idolatry, whose dogs and horses, deer and birds I knew line by line through delighted imitation. It seemed on that day as though the sun had gone out of the heavens, as though the pillars of the firmament had suddenly given way. Landseer dead! What then was the worth of living? But the wave of grief passed. I realized that the path was now clear before me. While Landseer lived, I was cribbed, cabined, confined;²² but now—My eyes cleared as I surveyed the magnificent horizon opening out before me. I must have room to live with this revelation. The garden was too narrow for such limitless thoughts to breathe in. I stole from the gate that led to the road by the pump and sought the wide meadows and the riverside to look this vast business squarely in the face. And for days the great secret of my future that I carried with me made the burden of a dull, unappreciative world light. Little did those who treated me as an ordinary idle boy know. Little did my elder brother, who ruled me with a rod of iron, realize that one day, when I was knighted and my pictures hung thick on the Academy²³ walls, he would regret his harsh treatment!

But to return to the garden. The egg-plum tree had no favour in my sight. Its position was too open and palpable. And indeed I cared not for the fruit. It was too large and fleshy for my taste. But the apple trees! These were the chief glory of the garden. Winter apple trees with fruit that ripened in secret; paysin trees with fruit that ripened on the branches, fruit small with rich crimson splashes on the dark-green ground; hawthorndean trees with fruit large yellow-green into which the teeth crunched with crisp and juicy joy. There was one hawthorndean most thoughtfully situated ²⁴ behind the tool-shed. And near by stood some props providentially placed there for domestic purposes. They were the keys with which I unlocked the treasure house.

A large quince tree grew on the other side of the hedge at the end of the garden. It threw its arms in a generous, neighbourly way over the hedge, and I knew its austere fruit well. Some of it came to me from its owner, an ancient man, "old Mr. Lake", who on summer days used to toss me largess ²⁵ from his abundance. The odour of a quince always brings back to me the memory of a sunny garden and a little old man over the hedge crying, "Here, my boy, catch!"

I have said nothing of that side of the garden where the vegetables grew. It was dull prose, relieved only by an occasional apple tree. The flowers in the fruit garden and by the paths were old-fashioned favourites, wall-flowers and mignonette, stocks and roses. And over the garden gate grew a spreading lilac whose tassels the bold militia men, ²⁶ who camped not far away, would gaily pluck as they passed on the bright May days. I did not

resent it. I was proud that these brave fellows in their red coats should levy tribute on our garden. It seemed somehow to link me up with the romance of war. By the kitchen door grew an elderberry tree, whose heavy and unpleasant odour was borne for the sake of the coming winter nights, when around the fire we sat with our hot elderberry wine and dipped our toast into the rich, steaming product of that odorous tree—nights when the winter apples came out from the chest, no longer hard and sour, but mellow and luscious as a King William pear in August, and when out in the garden all was dark and mysterious, gaunt trees standing out against the sky, where in the far distance a thin luminance told of the vast city beneath.

I passed by the old road recently, and sought the garden of my childhood. I sought in vain. A big factory had come into the little town, and workmen's dwellings had sprung up in its train. Where the garden had been there was now a school, surrounded by cottages, and children played on the doorsteps or in the little back yards, which looked on to other little back yards and cottages beyond. My garden with its noble hedge and its solitude, its companionable trees and grass-grown paths, had vanished. It was the garden of a dream.

NOTES

1. *Spaniards Road*, in Hampstead.
2. *the inexhaustible theme*. They talked of the Great War, which was then being fought.
3. *Parliament Fields*, in Hampstead.
4. *Hampstead*, a northern residential suburb of London.
5. *Beckenham*, a southern residential district of London.
6. *the glimpses of the moon*, a reminiscence of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.
7. *his hot gospel*, an American phrase, descriptive of the fiery sermons and the impetuous campaign of the modern religious or social reformer.
8. *awakened the sleeper*, i.e. made the world realize the value of the garden allotment.
9. *Will Crooks*, a celebrated Labour Member of Parliament and friend of the working-classes in the days of the War.
10. *intelligenza*, the people of a nation who demand the right to independent thinking.
11. *dithyrambic enthusiasm*, ecstasy or rhapsody.
12. These well-known lines were quoted at the time of the Peasants' Revolt in the fourteenth century.
13. *the garden of Epicurus*, Epicurus (342-270 B.C.) was a Greek philosopher, and founded the Epicurean school of philosophy. He used to teach his followers in a garden in Athens.
14. *Mr. Wells*, see note 8 in essay number 19.
15. These lines are quoted from the well-known short poem "A Garden is a Lovesome Thing", by Thomas Edward Brown (1830-97). The first line should be punctuated thus:
Not God! in gardens! when the eve is cool?
16. *The Story of the Hundred Days*, a boys' adventure book about the return of Napoleon Bonaparte from Elba and the battle of Waterloo.

17. *Black Watch*, a famous Highland regiment of the British Army.

18. *this high emprise*, this ambitious enterprise.

19. *without annoying interruptions*. The charming effect of the essay is heightened by the intrusion of the child's point of view.

20. *Monte Cristo*, &c., famous boys' adventure books.

21. *Landseer*, celebrated artist and member of the Royal Academy, who specialized in animal studies.

22. *cribbed, cabined, confined*, a reminiscence of *Macbeth*.

23. *Academy*, the Royal Academy. It is the ambition of every artist to have his pictures accepted by the Royal Academy.

24. *thoughtfully situated*. Again the humour of the boy's point of view.

25. *largess*, a gift.

26. *bold militia men*, a force of non-professional soldiers, somewhat like the volunteers or territorials of later years.

EXERCISES

1. What, according to Alpha, was 'the most important result of the war'?

2. Write an essay on: 'The divorce of the people from the soil.'

3. "It is not ponderable things alone that are found in gardens." Compare Alpha with Michael Fairless and Richard Jefferies from this viewpoint.

4. Write an essay on: 'The tyranny of the machine.'

5. Give some illustrations of Alpha's humour and love of literature.

6. "Alpha is friendly." Explain.

7. Discuss: He has polished his art to perfection.

8. What is the influence of the garden upon men?

No. 24.—Literature and Science

JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY

Mr. Murry, who was born in 1889, was educated at Christ's Hospital, Charles Lamb's school, and at Oxford. He was Chief Censor in 1919, editor of the *Athenæum* from 1919 to 1921; and he is now editor of the *Adelphi*. An art critic and a reviewer, his chief works are: *Still Life*, *Dostoevsky*, *The Evolution of an Intellectual*, *Cinnamon and Angelica*, *The Things We Are*, *Aspects of Literature*, *The Problem of Style*, *Countries of the Mind*, *Pencillings*, *The Voyage*, *Discoveries*, *To the Unknown God*, *Keats and Shakespeare*, *Things To Come*. This essay is from *Pencillings*.

The essayist makes his points with cleverness and a light and playful humour; while he finishes off his opponent on a delightfully unexpected note. The sceptre of literature is truly a magician's wand. He has something suggestive and arresting to say about the influence of great scientific movements upon literature; and he says it well.

A friend of mine wrote to me the other day that "the sceptre has passed from literature to science". He is, of course, a man of science himself. And it seemed rather strange that he should use such a very literary phrase to express his triumph. It would have been more appropriate if he had sent me an equation. I should not have known what the equation meant. Perhaps that was the reason why he sent me a metaphor instead.

While I pondered his phrase it began to look to me like

a barefaced contradiction in terms,¹ and I wondered what kind of an equation would adequately express his satisfaction that literature had at last to play second fiddle to science. Even if an equation could be discovered with the proper nuance² of "I told you so", what would be the pleasure for him if I did not appreciate it? No enemy is stronger than one who does not know he is beaten. And, to compare large things with small, would not the effect upon literature of the victory of science be precisely the same as the effect upon me of my defeat by an equation I could not understand? Literature may be shorn of its sceptre and its purple, but if there is no little boy to call out that the Emperor is naked, who will be the wiser? If nobody knows, who will care?

Nevertheless, since my friend is a brilliant man, I have done my best to extract a meaning from his phrase. I am sure that he means something more than to make my flesh creep. My flesh refuses to creep, but I want to know what he means. I suspect that his metaphor was badly chosen, and that he would have done better with two sceptres instead of one. Probably he meant that literature and science each had a sceptre, but the sceptre of science had of late become heavier and more imposing than the sceptre of literature. Literature now rules a little kingdom, while science rules a big one. But the kingdom of literature has certainly not been incorporated into the kingdom of science, nor is it likely to be. You might as well try to marry Boyle's Law³ to a bookcase.

But even if we take my friend to mean that science is now become a more important activity of the human mind than literature, is he saying more than that Boyle's Law

is more valuable than a bookcase? And is not that a judgment without import, as the logicians say? Is he not like a man who insists on comparing the values of logarithms and love? And if we suppose he means only that at the present time abler minds are engaged in scientific discovery than in literary creation—a question exceedingly difficult to judge—the issue is not affected. Quite possibly our bridges are better built than our poems nowadays. As Socrates ⁴ would have said, our bridges have more of the goodness of bridges than our poems have of the goodness of poems. But that does not mean that a bridge is more important than a poem, or a poem than a bridge.

I suspect that what my friend has in his head is that the Einstein ⁵ theory is a discovery of supreme philosophical importance; that for the first time the metaphysical doctrine of subjective idealism has been backed by a scientific proof; and that this will have a determining influence upon the future evolution of literature. The last of these propositions is the most doubtful. It is quite true that scientific theory does have an influence upon literary creation. But it has to be translated into emotional terms. In order to affect literature it has to affect our attitude to life. The theory of Natural Selection, emotionally interpreted as handing man over to the play of blind and uncontrollable forces, certainly gave a pessimistic tinge to the literature of the nineteenth century. The Copernican Revolution ⁶ no doubt contributed to that emphatic isolation of the individual which is the beginning of modern romanticism. But we cannot say that the literature of the nineteenth century is either more or less important than Darwinism or the Copernican Revolution.

There is no means of comparing them. What we can say is that the literature may wear better.⁷ When those two scientific theories have been exploded, as we are told they are being exploded now, the great books created by minds coloured by them will remain as fresh and valuable as ever.

For the truth of the matter surely is that there are very few emotional attitudes towards life which a man can truly and instinctively hold. He may believe life is painful and pitiful; he may believe it is glorious and splendid; he may confidently hope, he may continually despair, he may alternate between hope and despair. What his attitude will be is determined by many things: his heredity, his personal destiny, and to some degree by the scientific theories that obtain in his lifetime. A scientific theory which directly affects his hope of long life or immortality or better things to come, colours his mind and gives a twist to his sensibility. He becomes, if he is a writer, differently interested in life. In so far as either the Einstein theory or modern biology opens up new vistas of the significance or duration of human life, they will determine a change of tone in literature. Possibly the pessimism which still hangs about us like a cloud will be dissipated for a season. But it will return, simply because it is an eternal mode⁸ of the human spirit. And it may be dispelled without the cleansing wind of science, because optimism also is a natural mode of the human spirit.

Literature changes tone in obedience to these modes. But its substance is unchanged, for that is based on a delightful interest in human life and destinies. Science

has no power over that interest, which is a gift of the gods like the genius of communicating it. When the man of science has power to determine or to change the structure of our minds, then literature may begin to fear him. By that time ordinary men will fear him also, and there will be a massacre of biologists. But till that day science can do no more to literature than to help to decide whether its vision of life shall be tinged with pity or happiness, resignation or confidence.

This may equally be decided by the indifference of the writer's mistress or his happiness in love. Science is only one of the things which colour the glass through which the writer looks at life; at present it can neither give nor take away the gift of seeing clearly through the glass; neither can it increase nor diminish the pleasure of those who take delight in what the writer can show them. The sceptre of science may be the more majestic. Beside its massy steel the rod of literature may appear slight and slender. We do not expect a magician's wand " to look otherwise.

NOTES

1. *a barefaced contradiction in terms*. The essayists love to deal with the paradoxical.

2. *nuance*, delicate shade of meaning.

3. *Boyle's Law*: Robert Boyle (1627-91), English physicist. His law is that the volume of a gas, at a given temperature, varies inversely as the pressure.

4. *Socrates* (471-399 B.C.), Greek philosopher.

5. *Einstein*, born 1879; a German-Swiss scientist. Fellow of the Royal Society, Nobel prizeman in 1921. Until recently

Director of the Physical Institute in Berlin. He enunciated the new theory of relativity.

6. *the Copernican Revolution*, Copernicus (1473-1543), Polish astronomer, who enunciated a new system of astronomy which revolutionized scientific thought.

7. *may wear better*, may prove more lasting.

8. *mode*, fashion, custom, habit, manner of manifestation.

9. *a magician's wand*. The essayist cleverly ends his essay on a magnificently unexpected note.

EXERCISES

1. Gather together some examples of paradox from the preceding essays.

2. Give some examples of the writer's playful humour.

3. Discuss the effect of the Darwinian theory upon the literature of the nineteenth century.

4. What, according to the author, is the beginning of modern romanticism? Develop his argument.

5. Explain what the essayist means by "an eternal mode of the human spirit".

6. Write an essay on: The substance of literature is based upon a delightful interest in human life and destinies.

7. Explain: The rod of literature is a magician's wand.

8. Indicate the connexion between science and literature.

No. 25.—The English Essayist

JOHN FREEMAN

The English Essayist rounds off our study of the Essay in English literature. Mr. Freeman reintroduces to us many famous writers whose work we have been examining in these pages. He has much that is interesting and valuable to tell us about Bacon, Addison and Steele and their Periodical Essay, Swift, Goldsmith, Lamb, Hazlitt; and what he says must be collated with our own studies. Stretching Professor Saintsbury's elastic definition of the Essay as 'a work of prose art' to its widest extent, he has also brought to our notice writers of excellent prose who cannot be called essayists in the true sense of the term: Ben Jonson and his *Discoveries*, Sir Thomas Browne and his *Urn Burial*; Dryden and his *Essay on Dramatic Poetry*; Landor and his *Imaginary Conversations*, and finally the literary criticism of Walter Pater and Matthew Arnold. Some of Mr. Freeman's views may raise doubts in our minds: they are certainly provocative of thought. We pause to think whether the perfect egotist is the perfect essayist; we are not quite sure that your intellectual spendthrift is always your true essayist. But when Mr. Freeman speaks of the 'conscious art' of the essayist, and when he reminds us that the Essay 'is the peculiar form in which the mind independently roams, sinks, and soars, and pursues its delightful porpoise-way through territorial waters'; then we are sure that his foundations are sound. Finally, were it only for the marvellous ingenuity of his metaphors and similes, our debt to Mr. Freeman would be great.

I

Mr. Saintsbury's¹ phrase, "Works of prose art", lingers on the mind as the definition of Bacon's best work and a generalization of the essay itself. Split and refine it as we may, it has still an essential truth; the essay is a piece of prose art, and when we have marked its chief distinction and pursued its main diversions we shall find that its development has been towards a finer order, a more conscious art,² a heightening and ultimately a completer fusion of those twin faculties of the mind, imagination and reason.

The essay comes somewhat slowly into the story of English letters. Romantic narrative, miracle play, drama—these confusedly preceded, and the essay followed with an uncertain apprehension of the aims and powers of those other forms; and clearly the essay could have no place until the first exuberance of invention and imagination had passed, and men began to rub their eyes and look a little narrowly at what had been achieved and at what was left to do. Yet the essay has seldom been solely critical in any age, and in noting this we approach the first fork in our road; on one side the merely critical, the slightly curious or slightly arid abstraction—moral or æsthetic—and on the other the more serenely imaginative and mobile form which later ages were to bring to full development. Bacon's *Essays* belong to the moral and intellectual division, though not exclusively to that; the pregnancy of his phrase, his voluptuous verbal beauty and purely sensuous indulgences, noticeable in so many passages of music and solid colour, are a token

that his was indeed a complex spirit. Nevertheless, the real preoccupation of his essays is not sensuous or æsthetic, but moral and rational. Ask what is the most characteristic expression in Elizabethan letters of the mind of a liberal scholar, and the answer will probably be Bacon's *Essays*. Sedate and grave in his thoughts, splendid in his mode, he loves to invest his inspired and commonplace utterances alike in a gorgeous cloak. *Decadent!* a paradoxical writer might murmur as he notes the frequent overweighting of the idea by the expression, and reminds us thereby that decadence in literature is somewhat older than the already antique nineties at which we glance with amusement, anon with contempt. Bacon's commonplaces, looked at closely, are among the worst, being moral commonplaces—midgetary moralities augustly presented and speaking big. But it was not simply his delight in splendour which urged his noblest phrasing, it was equally his desire to use the magnificence of his time in the service of reason and order.

We are helped in thus seeing Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, by the familiar portrait which so comprehensively tells us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about our author. The gravity is there, the weighty preoccupation, the slyness of after-thoughts unexpressed, the richness of tone and hue—all these are seen more and more plainly as you stare back at his stare; and they are qualities that make him an essayist of real interest to the lightest as well as the profoundest reader. But they also make him a particular kind of essayist—not an intimate but a reserved figure, not a talker but a writer, not a babbler but a rhetorician, not

a companion but a teacher, not a friend but a great chancellor, not a familiar forgetting his dignity but a supple statesman asserting it; preferring to suppress, equivocate, and dissemble, and to justify every obliquity—anything rather than candidly pour himself out and leave the justification to the reader. The experience of a lifetime is the well from which his *aurea dicta* ³ are solemnly drawn; and who does not know the varied kinds of Bacon's experience? *Corruption's Nuncio* ⁴ we might call him, thinking of his sins and splendours, his meanness and magniloquence. He writes a whole essay "Of Cunning", beginning with a distinction between cunning and wisdom and forgetting the distinction long before he ends, the essay becoming a half-candid apology for cunning; he writes a sombre and noble eulogy of death, spending all he has in adorning those commonplaces that are never staled; but one thing he never attempts to do, rather does he avoid it—he never speaks out from the tiny callous kernel of his heart. It is not the true spendthrift of himself who writes: "Nakedness is uncomely as well in mind as in body; and it addeth no small reverence to men's names, manners, and actions, if they be not altogether open"; and in the same essay proceeds to vindicate simulation and dissimulation. The intellectual spendthrift ⁵ is the true essayist, if only to have enough of himself to spend; but Bacon was a miser of himself, sitting furred and gilded and cold, like some gorgeous Renaissance figure of a dusky painting, counting over his gains with pursed lips and sidelong eye, his fingers trembling, jewels flashing, and lips shaping a careful phrase for the enrichment of hungry Time.

He may have taught Ben Jonson,⁶ a slightly younger man, the secret of sententiousness, or at least its value, as well as the use of the flower-like decoration of simple prose; for Bacon himself might be heard in the closing note of this from the *Discoveries*: "What a deal of cold business doth a man mispend the better part of life in! in scattering compliments, tendering visits, gathering and venting news, following feasts and plays, making a little winter love in a dark corner." Conciseness is his aim, in a degree that even Bacon never cared for, and all the weightiness of the penurious chancellor is found in these little essays of his thriftless contemporary. If, however, Jonson's style offers reminders of the greater essayist, it presents differences far more positive. He empties himself prodigally before you and does not scruple to tell precisely those things which Bacon hid. The conversations at Hawthornden, as related by Drummond,⁷ reveal sharply enough his huge sense of his own worth and others' worthlessness, for nothing that is not Ben Jonson's pleases him freely, and there is mere curishness in his constant diminution of every figure within his recollection; but in the *Discoveries* his freedoms are pleasanter. He still sneers, and sneers even at Montaigne⁸ for an essayist; but happily he is more truly at ease when he speaks of his own life. Not for Jonson any vaunting or practice of dissimulation. "At last they upbraided my poverty. I confess she is my Domestic, sober of diet, simple of habit, frugal, painful; a good Counsellor to me, that keeps me from Cruelty, Pride, or other more delicate impertinences which are the Nurse-children of Riches." He writes an essay on "Style",

and still it is of Ben Jonson he writes, saying how he loves a pure and neat language, how often a barbarous phrase has made him out of love with good sense; their writings need sunshine, he cries, as he thinks of delinquent authors. Himself dominates his writings, and consequently you are aware of that vivacious figure, that Stentor voice⁹ of authority, that rude yet delicate power of picture, that fond assertion of his own tastes, which we faintly conjure up when we look on any portrait of Jonson. He jibes at Montaigne, but follows him.

II

Many of the authors of what is conveniently called miscellaneous prose, in the years succeeding Jonson's death, are strictly essayists, and of all the truest essayist and finest master of our medium was Sir Thomas Browne.¹⁰ It is unnecessary to point out that he too takes a place in our second and more native class of essayist—those who follow the imaginative and mobile personal form. Browne plays upon his own being like a splendid musician who is able to evoke the solemn and the playful, the wise and the tender, from the depths and shallows of his inward life; and then, turning to a vaster instrument, with equal serenity he summons the august, dreadful yet unoppressive echo-voices of death and time. Now 'tis like all instruments, now like a lonely flute. In the midst of the largest of his generalizations you never lose sight of himself; in his most fantastic speculations a clear-smiling grave spirit is distinct and individual. Shut your eyes as a phrase from *Urn Burial* or *Religio Medici* unfolds

upon the air, and you see at once the courtly, masculine face, the eyes of smouldering fancies and passionate, tranquil curiosity that make Sir Thomas Browne living and dear more than dead and remembered. Does he write for any but himself? true essayist, it is thus that he writes for us. After three centuries we should be little engrossed in any writer who is not engrossed in himself. Ideas may attract, history and science may touch a faded figure with spectral incandescence, but only that which is human lives on in human affections. It is a pitiful truism to say that Browne's primary quality is Browne. Seventeenth-century morals (whether Christian or non-Christian), cinerary rites ¹¹—these would not of themselves distract the twentieth century from thinking of its own morals and incineration; but Browne has done something with the essay which no other writer has done so potently—he has deepened the form as an English tradition and exalted it as an English art. "Vain ashes," he writes—"Vain ashes, which in the oblivion of names, persons, times and sexes, have found unto themselves a fruitless continuation, and only arise unto late posterity as Emblems of mortal vanities, Antidotes against pride, vainglory, and maddening vices." It is singular enough that his own skull should have been gnawed out of the grave—a fate that he shrank from as a "tragical abomination"; but is it an antidote against pride? Would he have been humbled to know it, or provoked to a new and yet more gorgeous dehortation upon chance, and the insecurity of death? And for ourselves, we peer at his pages for a sight of him, and we find his skull at our feet. Gentlest of mockeries!

III

In pursuing our theme along these not too densely hedged paths, we must not be beguiled into mere vague extension, else we should be sweeping all the pamphleteers that succeeded Browne into our narrow scope. The pamphlet is not an essay except by a fortunate accident, and the air of dispute and violent wrangling amid which the pamphleteer's voice is heard is not the air in which literature survives when the subject of contention is itself burnt out. Dryden¹² is one who outrides the dispute he engaged in, but in citing Dryden here I am naming simply the chief and not the sole late seventeenth-century essayist, and first if not the chief of those who practised purely critical writing. The famous *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, born of a dispute with Sir Robert Howard and giving birth in turn to other provocative treatises, is the admired example of the best work of the critical kind, and it followed hard upon an essay which, for other qualities, deserves nearly as much praise—Cowley's¹³ *Discourse Concerning Oliver Cromwell*. In each case there is reason harnessed to imagination, a criticism of affairs or a criticism of ideas; each is a work of prose art, each shows a beautiful art of prose. The chief difference between Jonson and Browne on one side, and Cowley and Dryden on the other, is that the latter do not speak so freely of themselves; they are not involuntary revealers of their own business and bosoms, they are not portrait artists, they are not their own texts. If therefore they lose or refrain from the last charm, it must be owned

that they do not pretend to it. You cannot read Dryden's very features into his *Dramatic Poesy*, and, Dryden being Dryden, it is to be doubted whether that essay would be better if you could. He has much, but not *that* charm, not *that* power over us; while Cowley has powers of humour, satire, and an admiring scorn, but not the gift of showing in a few brief pages the shape and shadow of his inward being; he does not step out of or even into his own pages and set them shaking in our hand. Dryden's intellectual force could not but make itself everywhere apparent in his *Dramatic Poesy*, but this is a mere general quality, not a personal and identifiable characteristic; and general qualities may exist in abundance, yet the personal features, the human lineaments, faculties, and humours remain vague and uncomposed. But, as we have said, Dryden was doing one kind and not another kind of thing—the intellectual, the critical essay, the essay of ideas, the essay which ought to be understandable almost as well in French as in English. And this indeed points to a quick test, for the essay of the singularly personal kind, the essay of self-portraiture (whether quite involuntary or quite deliberate), as Browne and Lamb used it, is perhaps inevitably untranslatable. Our homage, nevertheless, can be offered to Dryden as the father of that “criticism of ideas” which critics of our day deplore the want of and which, indeed, our literary tradition seems natively incapable of begetting. What Dryden himself can give us is this intellectual criticism in a prose which delights us in its own way scarcely less than Jonson's in another. It is a prose that fits its subject like a glove, like the skin to the flesh of the hand; but at

times its rational strictness is broken and the phrases leap:

My Lord,

This worthless present was designed you, long before it was a Play; when it was only a confused mass of thoughts tumbling over one another in the dark: when the Fancy was yet in its first work, moving the sleeping Images of Things towards the light, there to be distinguished; and then, either chosen or rejected by the Judgment. It was yours, My Lord! before I could call it mine.

If Dryden told cousin Swift that he would never be a poet, as he is supposed to have said, he could not have told him he would never be a prose writer. Swift's prose was miscellaneous enough, but he does not permit us to confine him within our notion of essays, and if he can fairly be called an essayist it is mainly because he was one of the begetters of another kind of essay—the periodical essay—the light-armed, light-headed infantry of prose literature; and might we but add light-hearted, that would indeed be final praise, but except in the Roger de Coverley series it had no heart at all. Truth reminds us, however, that Swift was begetting something far unlike himself, far different from his own sombre and burdened imaginations. Here, in the prattling shallows of Addison's wit, in the gay impulses of Steele's good nature, in the light, neat, sociable prose of both, the new kind of essay was created in sudden perfection. Literature as a hand-maid, waiting-wench to fashion, conventions, morals,

mere dresser to a patched and painted actress, or moving among the teacups and gossips of a society in which it seemeth always afternoon—these are the new offices to which imagination and “wit” are subdued. Genius has come to town and put off its native rudeness and power, and put on urban airs and graces, the airs of a flirt in a metropolis that has just discovered the meaning of “polite” and “charming”, the graces of an impertinent dependent. There is masterly portraiture in the *Spectator* and *Tatler*, delicate engraving, faint felicities of pencil and needle, but it is rather a portraiture of society than of the artists themselves; they are sunken in the crowd for which they speak, they are not the perfect egotists who are to be identified with the perfect essayists. It is perhaps not very strange that the age in which everybody wrote essays and the form was sharpened for the use of the society just finding its feet or its head, was an age in which a level was reached and the peaks sank to the level. When all wrote well none wrote supremely.

IV

It is to Johnson that we must look for supremacy in another kind, and to Goldsmith for a gift as unique as Johnson's if less powerful. Johnson made a new thing when he followed the periodical essay of the *Kambler* with the mature improvisations—it is their charm that they are scarcely more—of *The Lives of the Poets*. They form the model of the biographica¹ essay, in which the features of the subject are drawn sometimes minutely and sometimes freely, and behind these the features of the

writer himself, the avowed portrait dimming away into the careless and unconscious portrait of the artist; or if the self-portraiture is less unstudied, as in that beautiful tribute to Gilbert Walmsley occurring in the life of Smith, it is no whit less delightful. Johnson's large and eloquent personality continually overflowed, and on the waves the light and fragile memories of the immemorable, the Smiths and Dukes and Sprats of his fortuitous collection, floated securely. It is only because so many have tried their nervous hands at the biographical essay, in artless imitation, that Johnson's work is not unique; but it is still unapproached.

And so we might turn to Goldsmith, deliciously satirical, the most innocent of men, writing his *Citizen of the World* as though he were standing outside the world and looking on amused; ostensibly following the critical type of our classification, but with imagination continually breaking through. The shadow of the pathetic which has always been cast on Goldsmith's figure, heaven knows why, by writers of his time, has obscured some of his independent merits, and the *Citizen* has been stupidly overlooked because its author has been sentimentalized. From Goldsmith, again, it is a single flying leap to Lamb and Hazlitt, and a new development of the essay. Imagination continually breaking through might be said of Lamb also, but I do not pretend to define Lamb's mode. Lamb is no Lamb ¹⁴ but a thing of nimbler nature—sometimes a mocking cuckoo, sometimes a wise, white owl, blinking his enormous golden orbs against an intrusive light and whirring into the soft dusky privacy of the mind; sometimes a robin, friendliest of domestic voices,

kindest of winter's colours; and sometimes a rich-throated blackbird flitting with his prose elegies about the graves of the poets he loved—Sidney and Cotton and Coleridge and the rest; the purest of egotists, the most candid of self-revealers, the best loved of all lovers. It is easier, though hardly more useful, to find a metaphor for Hazlitt—that vigorous, restless, watchful, and growling hound, who barks out his short, crisp sentences, snaps here, fondles there, never sleeps, has a merry eye for a few and a flashing eye for most, flings himself with wild fangs upon a Gifford and heaves at last with angry gratification. He, too, is his own eternal subject; his essays are the irritable plate on which his features have been recorded, both consciously and unconsciously, during long years of self-communion. Extravagancies of metaphor, however, are to be avoided, and we may leave Hazlitt (never quite adequately admired), and stay scarce a moment to mark De Quincey's intricate confusion of sound with colour, the rich hues wreathed in cloud, in those disorderly conceptions which at once fascinate and fatigue us, and prove that in him one of the greatest essayists was strangled, alas, and not fulfilled—an impish and unstable figure playing upon his own fantastic personality as though it were another's. We may leave, too, the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh* reviewers of his day, by whom the essay was more and more steadily reduced to journalism, sometimes critical, sometimes dishonest, sometimes merely uncritical; but we cannot so easily leave his impressive contemporary Landor,¹⁵ who achieved a new form for the essay when he wrote and rewrote his all but endless *Imaginary Conversations*, mingling by mere hap the ima-

ginitive and the rational in capricious proportion and using a prose that no one since has bettered. Yet it would be foolish to attempt the definition of Landor's mode or the praise of his style, that can be dull when the subject is tedious, and serene and noble when the theme is right. With Landor it is not enough that he should write of himself, for even then he is sometimes merely solemn and garrulous, and perhaps he needs the warmth of a mental opposition; but his best passages may occur almost anywhere, and include such phrasing as this that echoes along the vaulting of the senses:

"He who hath lived in this country, can enjoy no distant one. He breathes here another air; he lives more life; a brighter sun invigorates his studies, and serener stars influence his repose. Barbary hath also the blessing of climate; and although I do not desire to be there again, I sometimes feel a kind of regret at leaving it. A bell warbles the more mellifluously in the air when the sound of the stroke is over, and when another swims out from underneath it, and pants upon the element that gave it birth. In like manner the recollection of a thing is frequently more pleasing than the actuality; what is harsh is dropped in the space between."

Landor might have told more of himself if he had been less sharply aware of himself and had cared less to support an ideal disdain which we cannot wholly admire; but he is still an essayist of the true personal order, still the self-portrayer, with a restless world sinking into sullen cloud behind his briefly tranquillized figure.

But injustice will yet be done if we pursue this light-heeled journey with no more than an unreflecting glance

at Matthew Arnold,¹⁶ and forget the sallies that shook, or at 'east vexed, the intellectual world of fifty years ago. Arnold enjoyed the air of dispute and was never so happy as in asserting that others were wrong and foolish and perturbed about nothing, and thus he hangs half-way between the critical and the personal, friendlier than he cares to show, yet guarding his inward flame somewhat too jealously from the casual breath of others. And in speaking of Arnold, as of Walter Pater,¹⁷ the reference is likely to sound purely and completely one of personal fondness, the regard for Pater especially being grounded partly upon a sympathy with his general æsthetic attitude, and partly upon an admiration of his silent, smouldering passion of English prose. The sympathy and the admiration alike are nourished by "Sebastian Van Storck" and the rest of his *Imaginary Portraits*, as well as those many essays, long or short, from *Marius* to the child in the house, wherein Pater is disclosing, in subdued and burning hue, the movement of his sense-exalted, sense confounded spirit.

These I cannot linger over; they are chiefly essayists of the imaginative division, and when they touch criticism it is of the order that a few stern readers abhor and most admire, being a result of the confronting of their own and their subjects' personalities, the opposition of their stars or the conjunction of their loves. Precisely the same thing is to be seen in others of their time and later, in Coventry Patmore¹⁸ and Alice Meynell,¹⁹ and in certain living writers who practise an honoured art and remember that it is an art, a service, and a dignity—I refer to Mr. George Moore²⁰ and Mr. Max Beerbohm;²¹ and in

speaking of these latter writers, I remember first of all that they have achieved felicity irrespective of a lucky choice of subject. Like a dim-silked, dark-hued Mandarin, moving amid the strange confusion of an Occidental procession, "Max" keeps a fine reserve that is itself more expressive than others' loquacity, and achieves the last distinction by forbearance, elision, and a civil avoidance of paunchy superfluity.²² But Mr. Moore—I find no single similitude for him. The chameleon²³ is not more changeable, the snake with his annual sloughing of faded vesture is not more subtly renewed, the cock that crows against the sun lifts no prouder head, the stoat has not slyer motion, the kestrel no more watchful eye nor idler-seeming pose, the wandering mew no lonelier note nor her shadow a briefer visitation, than Mr. George Moore in the abundant prose that began, for our purpose, in *Essays and Opinions* and grew perfect a generation later in *Avowals*. To gloat over these, co-rivals and twin incomparables, would be to forgo the pleasure of pondering even a brief word upon others of our day who, like them, have given of their best to this winning and wanton form: wanton, it may be called, because it is the peculiar form in which the mind independently roams, sinks and soars, and pursues its delightful porpoise-way through territorial waters. The essayist that lately died with W. H. Hudson is an example of one kind, the essayist that continually renews a sprightly youth in Mr. Saintsbury is another kind, and between the two there are how many contemporaries, critical or imaginative, strict or desultory, for whose lightest page we are all grateful. Hudson identified himself with his subject and thereby the more

completely and purely expressed himself; Mr. Saintsbury, in his *Scrap Books* (for example) of the last few years, has given us something almost unique in its careless fullness, its readiness of resource, its Johnsonian echo of humorous and sane dogmatism.

V

But here the boldest of writers must pause, when he finds himself among contemporaries who are plainly of the elect company of their predecessors, and especially if he has looked even a little critically at some and indulgently at others, avowing thereby his own likings more than any abstract standard of judgment. The phrase used by a modern poet, Mr. W. H. Davies, "short men that sit tall", may be adopted to describe the aspiring humbleness that befits such a writer, as he looks out upon his world. Thorns outline the fields, and there is indeed as much of rebuke as of stimulation in the view, sting and sweetness equally palpable. But no man can be forbidden the indulgence of his own thoughts, and criticism is subdued in pleasure when the English essay is followed from the time of Queen Elizabeth down to our own vivid and voracious day. If pleasure is then my only excuse, it may be stated boldly that no other is needed and a cat may still look at a kingdom if only he refrains from snarling at kingship and kingdoms; a task or pastime for which I have not the least inclination.

My simple theme, then, reiterated to tediousness but now concluded, is that the mere egotism of the author, freely confessed or subtly dissembled, forms the chief

delight of the English essay. Musing upon his own thoughts and instincts, upon whatever in himself is powerful though inarticulate, upon his own passions and humours, the true essayist awakes in his readers the admiration of a soldier for his captain, the fondness of a lover for his last beloved. Intimacies stir and run out beneath the common soil, experience rains down and quickens the roots, and the thoughts of the author at length become the thoughts of the reader, his passions become our passions, his humours ours, his virtues and follies ours; for the main concern of any reader is with the author himself, and there is no bond so secure, no link so unrusting, as this that gleams between them. The literature of the last hundred years has seen the triumph of the novel, vast satrapies overrun and a border-war with science beginning, like that deadly Flanders war of trench and gas; and the essay has been left unattempted by alert spirits that might have won. Nevertheless, the essay lives and thrives. Resuming metaphor ²⁴ for the last time it may be said that, like a huge oak, whose guttered trunk and fungus'd shoulder darkens the hill, the English novel stands boldly yet, his thin hair shaking in the cold winds; but the essay is like a thicket, changing and never dying, with dusks and deeps within, refuge of birds and shy wild beasts, home of strange and familiar voices.

NOTES

1. *Mr. Saintsbury*, celebrated Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at Edinburgh University. Well-known lecturer on literary subjects, and an acknowledged authority on certain aspects of literature, particularly its prose writers.

2. *a more conscious art*, in these words we have the essence of the essay.

3. *aurea dicta*, golden sayings.

4. *Nuncio*, a messenger.

5. *the intellectual spendthrift*. As an exercise the student should rewrite this sentence in literal English, avoiding the metaphor.

6. *Ben Jonson* (1573-1637), famous Elizabethan dramatist, contemporary with Shakespeare. Wrote *Every Man in His Humour*, *The Alchemist*, *Volpone*, and other plays; also some poems.

7. *Drummond*, a minor Scottish poet. In 1618 Ben Jonson went on a walking tour in Scotland, and paid a visit to Drummond at his residence in Hawthornden on the River Esk. Drummond made notes, for his own satisfaction, of Jonson's conversation during the visit.

8. *Montaigne*, a famous French essayist of the time of Shakespeare.

9. *Stentor voice*, Stentor was the Homeric herald.

10. *Sir Thomas Browne* (1605-82) wrote *The Garden of Cyrus*, *Urn Burial*, *Religio Medici*.

11. *cinerary rites*, described in *Urn Burial*.

12. *Dryden* (1631-1700), dramatist, poet, satirist, and literary critic of the seventeenth century.

13. *Cowley* (1618-67), poet and essayist of Milton's time.

14. *Lamb is no Lamb*. As an exercise the student should reduce to literal English this metaphorical description of Lamb's work.

15. *Landor* (1775-1864), poet and prose writer. His *Imaginary*

Conversations (which can hardly come within any definition of the essay) are written in beautiful English.

16. *Matthew Arnold* (1822-88), famous as a poet and literary critic. His *Essays in Criticism* can hardly be called essays in the true sense of the term.

17. *Walter Pater* (1839-94), excellent critic of literature, as in *The Renaissance* and *Appreciations*.

18. *Coventry Patmore* (1823-96), modern poet and essayist.

19. *Alice Meynell*, one of the most delightful of the women poets of modern times, as is seen in her famous sonnet *Renouncement*, and in little poems like *The Lady of the Lambs*.

20. *Mr. George Moore* and 21. *Mr. Max Beerbohm*, celebrated modern writers.

22. Translate this description of the style of Mr. Beerbohm into simple English.

23. *The chameleon*. As an exercise the student should reduce this description of Mr. Moore's style to literal English, avoiding all figurative language.

24. *Resuming metaphor*. Another exercise for the student in reducing metaphorical expression to literalness.

EXERCISES

1. Examine critically Saintsbury's definition of the essay as 'a work of prose art'.

2. Make a summary of the writer's remarks on Bacon, and discuss how far they apply to the essay on *Judicature*.

3. *Decadence* is here defined as 'the overweighting of the idea by the expression'. Which of the essayists appear to you to be 'decadent'?

4. "Not a companion but a teacher." Investigate this charge against Bacon. Do you think an essayist must be a companion?

5. Explain: The intellectual spendthrift is the true essayist.

6. Write out a summary of the author's views on Ben Jonson.

7. It is said of certain essayists that 'their writings need sunshine'. What does this mean?

8. Summarize what is said about the style of Sir Thomas Browne.

9. State briefly what is said about Dryden as a critic.

10. Examine: The perfect egotist is the perfect essayist.

11. Summarize Mr. Freeman's remarks on the periodical essay of Addison and Steele.

12. Examine carefully this definition of the Essay: "It is the peculiar form in which the mind independently roams, sinks and soars, and pursues its delightful porpoise-way through territorial waters". Show that this is practically identical with Dr. Johnson's famous definition, 'A loose sally of the mind'

