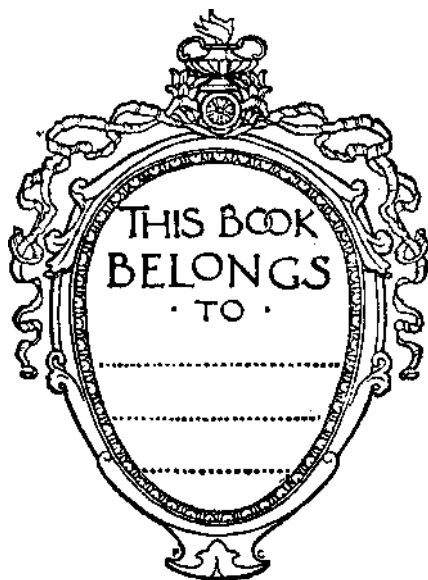
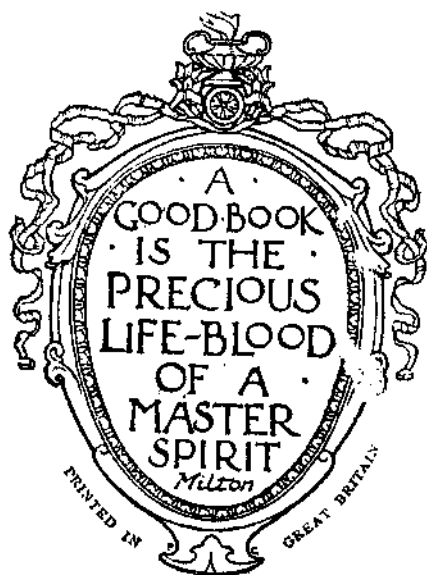


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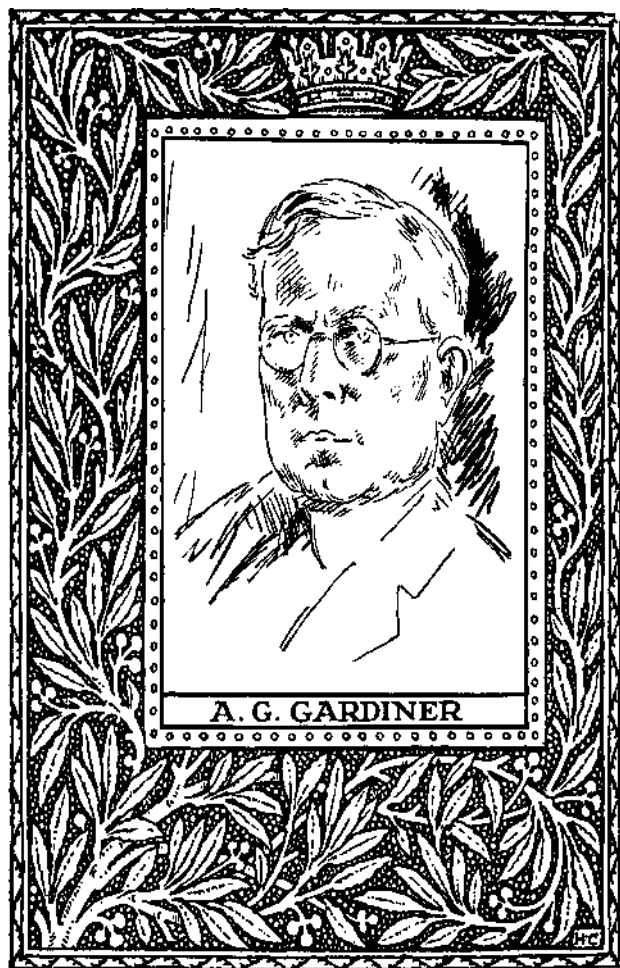
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A. G. GARDINER

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ALPHA OF
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THIRD SERIES



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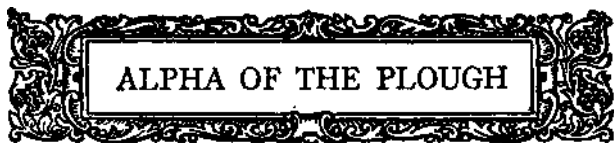
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NOTE

THE welcome given to the two previous volumes of selections from the essays of Alpha of the Plough encourages us to present a third series. In the case of some of the selections—e.g. "Happy Faces in the Strand," "On Courage," etc.—it should be remembered that they were written under some passing aspect of the Great War and should be read in the light of that fact.



ALPHA OF THE PLOUGH

JEMIMA

I TOOK a garden fork just now and went out to dig up the artichokes. When Jemima saw me crossing the orchard with a fork he called a committee meeting, or rather a general assembly, and after some joyous discussion it was decided *nem. con.* that the thing was worth looking into. Forthwith, the whole family of Indian runners lined up in single file, and led by Jemima followed faithfully in my track towards the artichoke bed, with a gabble of merry noises. Jemima was first into the breach. He always is. . . .

But before I proceed it is necessary to explain. You will have observed that I have twice referred to Jemima in the masculine gender. Doubtless you said, "How careless of the printer! Once might be forgiven; but twice——" Dear madam (or sir), the printer is on this occasion blameless. It seems incredible, but it's so. The truth is that Jemima was the yictim of an accident at the christening ceremony. He was one of a brood who, as they came like little balls of yellow fluff out of the shell, received names of appropriate ambiguity—all except Jemima. There were Lob and Lop, Two Spot and Waddles, Puddle-duck and Why ?, Greedy and Baby, and so on. Every name as safe as the bank, equal to all contingencies—except Jemima. What reckless impulse led us to call him Jemima I forget. But regardless of his name, he

grew up into a handsome drake—a proud and gaudy fellow, who doesn't care twopence what you call him so long as you call him to the Diet of Worms.

And here he is, surrounded by his household, who, as they gabble, gobble, and crowd in on me so that I have to scare them off in order to drive in the fork. Jemima keeps his eye on the fork as a good batsman keeps his eye on the ball. The flash of a fork appeals to him like the sound of a trumpet to the warhorse. He will lead his battalion through fire and water in pursuit of it. He knows that a fork has some mystical connection with worms, and doubtless regards it as a beneficent deity. The others are content to grub in the new-turned soil, but he, with his larger reasoning power, knows that the fork produces the worms and that the way to get the fattest worms is to hang on to the fork. From the way he watches it I rather fancy he thinks the worms come out of the fork. Look at him now. He cocks his unwinking eye up at the retreating fork, expecting to see large, squirming worms dropping from it, and Greedy nips in under his nose and gobbles a waggling beauty. My excellent friend, I say, addressing Jemima, you know both too much and too little. If you had known a little more you would have had that worm; if you had known a little less you would have had that worm. Let me commend to you the words of the poet:

**A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.**

I've known many people like you, who miss the worm because they know too much but don't know enough. Now Greedy——

But clear off all of you. What ho! there. . . . The scales! . . . Here is a bumper root. . . . Jemima realizes that something unusual has happened, assembles the family, and discusses the mystery with great animation. It is this interest in affairs that makes the Indian runners such agreeable companions. You can never be lonely with a family of Indian runners about. Unlike the poor solitary hens who go grubbing about the orchard without an idea in their silly heads, these creatures live in a perpetual gossip. The world is full of such a number of things that they hardly ever leave off talking, and though they all talk together they are so amiable about it that it makes you feel cheerful to hear them. . . . But here are the scales. . . . Five pounds three ounces. . . . Now what do you say to that, Jemima? Let us turn to and see if we can beat it.

The idea is taken up with acclamation, and as I resume digging I am enveloped once more by the mob of ducks, Jemima still running dreadful risks in his attachment to the fork. He is a nuisance, but it would be ungracious to complain, for his days are numbered. You don't know it, I said, but you are feasting to-day in order that others may feast to-morrow. You devour the worm, and a larger and more cunning animal will devour you. He cocks up his head and fixes me with that beady eye that gleams with such artless yet searching intelligence. . . . You are right, Jemima. That, as you observe, is only half the tale. You eat the worm, and the large, cunning animal eats you, but—yes, Jemima, the crude fact has to be faced that the

ALPHA OF THE PLOUGH

worm takes up the tale again where Man the Mighty leaves off:

His heart is builded
For pride, for potency, infinity,
All heights, all deeps, and all immensities,
Arrased with purple like the house of kings,
To stall the grey-rat, and the carrion-worm
Statelily lodge . . .

I accept your reminder, Jemima. I remember with humility that I, like you, am only a link in the chain of the Great Mother of Mysteries, who creates to devour and devours to create. I thank you, Jemima. And driving in the fork and turning up the soil I seized a large fat worm. I present you with this, Jemima, I said, as a mark of my esteem . . .

ON BORES

I WAS talking in the smoking-room of a club with a man of somewhat blunt manner when Blossom came up, clapped him on the shoulder, and began: "Well, I think America is bound to——" "Now, do you mind giving us two minutes?" broke in the other, with harsh emphasis. Blossom, unabashed and unperturbed, moved off to try his opening on another group. Poor Blossom! I had almost said "Dear Blossom/" For he is really an excellent fellow. The only thing that is the matter with Blossom is that he is a bore. He has every virtue except the virtue of being desirable company. You feel that you could love Blossom if he would only keep away. If you heard of his death you would be genuinely grieved and would send a wreath to his

grave and a nice letter of condolence to his wife and numerous children.

But it is only absence that makes the heart grow fond of Blossom. When he appears all your affection for him withers. You hope that he will not see you. You shrink to your smallest dimensions. You talk with an air of intense privacy. You keep your face averted. You wonder whether the back of your head is easily distinguishable among so many heads. All in vain. He approacheth with the remorselessness of fate. He putteth his hand upon your shoulder. He remarketh with the air of one that bringeth new news and good news: "Well, I think that America is bound to——" And then he taketh a chair and thou lookest at the clock and wonderest how soon thou canst decently remember another engagement.

Blossom is the bore courageous. He descends on the choicest company without fear or parley. Out, sword, and at 'em, is his motto. He advances with a firm voice and a confident air, as of one who knows he is welcome everywhere and has only to choose his company. He will have nothing but the best, and as he enters the room you may see his eye roving from' table to table, not in search of the glad eye of recognition, but of the most select companionship, and having marked down his prey he goes forward boldly to the attack, salutes the circle with easy familiarity, draws up his chair with assured and masterful authority, and plunges into the stream of talk with the heavy impact of a walrus or hippopotamus taking a bath. The company around him

melts away, but he is not dismayed. Left alone with a circle of empty chairs, he riseth like a giant refreshed, casteth his eye abroad, noteth another group that whetteth his appetite for good fellowship, moveth towards it with bold and resolute front. You may see him put to flight as many as three circles inside an hour, and retire at the end, not because he is beaten, but because there is nothing left worth crossing swords with. "A very good club to-night," he says to Mrs. B. as he puts on his slippers.

Not so Trip. He is the bore circumspect. He proceeds by sap and mine where Blossom charges the battlements sword in hand. He enters timidly as one who hopes that he will be unobserved. He goes to the table and examines the newspapers, takes one and seats himself alone. But not so much alone that he is entirely out of the range of those fellows in the corner who keep up such a cut-and-thrust of wit. Perchance one of them may catch his eye and open the circle to him. He readeth his paper sedulously, but his glance passeth incontinently outside the margin or over the top of the page to the coveted group. No responsive eye meets his. He moveth just a thought nearer along the sofa by the wall. Now he is well within hearing. Now he is almost of the company itself. But still unseen—noticeably unseen. He puts down his paper, not ostentatiously but furtively. He listens openly to the conversation, as one who has been enmeshed in it unconsciously, accidentally, almost unwillingly, for was he not absorbed in his paper until this conversation disturbed him? And now it would be almost uncivil not to

listen. He waits for a convenient opening and then gently insinuates a remark like one venturing on untried ice. And the ice breaks and the circle melts. For Trip, too, is a bore.

I remember in those wonderful submarine pictures of the brothers Williamson, which we saw in London some time ago, a strange fish at whose approach all the other fish turned tail. It was not, I think, that they feared him, nor that he was less presentable in appearance than any other fish, but simply that there was something about him that made them remember things. I forget what his name was, or whether he even had a name. But his calling was obvious. He was the Club Bore. He was the fish who sent the other fish about their business. I thought of Blossom as I saw that lonely creature whisking through the water in search of some friendly ear into which he could remark—"Well, I think that America is bound to——" or words to that effect. I thought how superior an animal is man. He doth not hastily flee from the bore as these fish did. He hath bowels of compassion. He tempereth the wind to the shorn lamb. He looketh at the clock, he beareth his agony a space, he seemeth even to welcome Blossom, he stealeth away with delicate solicitude for his feelings.

It is a hard fate to be sociable and yet not to have the gift of sociability. It is a small quality that is lacking. Good company insists on one sauce. It must have humour. Anything else may be lacking, but this is the salt that gives savour to all the rest. And the humour must not be that counterfeit

currency which consists in the retailing of borrowed stories. "Of all bores whom man in his folly hesitates to hang, and Heaven in its mysterious wisdom suffers to propagate its species," says De Quincey, "the most insufferable is the teller of good stories." It is an over-hard saying, subject to exceptions; but it contains the essential truth, for the humour of good company must be an authentic emanation of personality and not a borrowed tale. It is no discredit to be a bore. Very great men have been bores! I fancy that Macaulay, with all his transcendent gifts, was a bore. My head aches even at the thought of an evening spent in the midst of the terrific torrent of facts and certainties that poured from that brilliant and amiable man. I find myself in agreement for once with Melbourne, who wished that he was "as cocksure of one thing as Macaulay was of everything." There is pretty clear evidence that Wordsworth was a bore and that Coleridge was a bore, and I am sure Bob Southey must have been an intolerable bore. And Necker's daughter was fortunate to escape Gibbon, for he was assuredly a prince of bores. He took pains to leave posterity in no doubt on the point. He wrote his *Autobiography* which, as a wit observed, shewed that "he did not know the difference between himself and the Roman Empire. He has related his 'progressions from London to Beriton and from Beriton to London' in the same monotonous, majestic periods that he recorded the fall of states and empires." Yes, an indubitable bore. Yet these were all admirable men and even great men. Let

not therefore the Blossoms and the Trips be discomfited. It may be that it is not they who are not fit company for us, but we who are not fit company for them.

THE JESTS OF CHANCE

THERE is one story in Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson's autobiography that is sure of a place among the legends of celebrated men. It is that in which he tells by what a lucky accident he was saved, when "a raw recruit," from deserting from the army, of which he was destined to become one of the most illustrious ornaments. Another young private who occupied a bed in the room in which he slept stole the civilian clothes in which Robertson contemplated making his escape, and vanished. I dare say Robertson said some harsh things at the time about the thief, who had put temptation out of his way; but he must have thanked him almost every day of his life since. For in taking away Robertson's clothes the thief had put a field-marshal's baton in his knapsack.

Not many of us have the luck to become field-marshals through the purloining of our trousers, but few of us are without experience of the part which trifles that seem of small moment at the time play in our careers. "Character," says Victor Hugo, "is destiny," and a greater than Hugo has observed that it is not in our stars but in ourselves that we are thus and thus. This is no doubt true, though the doctrine may be carried too far. For example, I think that

Hazlitt is a little unjust to Charles James Fox when he says that the history of his failure is written in his fluctuating chin. I doubt whether, if the parts had been reversed, Pitt would have done any better. But no one can compare the easy, good-natured profile of Fox with the haughty masterfulness of Pitt's without knowing which of the two would win in an encounter of will-power where the circumstances were even.

I remember Lord Fisher once describing to me with great admiration a wonderful feat of navigation by which that famous sailor, Admiral Wilson, had brought the fleet through great perils in a fog, fighting all the way with his obstinate chief officer over charts and calculations. "But Wilson had his way," said Fisher. "You see, his jaw stuck out half an inch farther than the other fellow's." There is much virtue in a jaw that will stand no nonsense. You can read the whole history of the most wonderful one-man achievement in the annals of trade in the stubborn chin of Lord Leverhulme, just as you can read the tale of Mr. Balfour's political purposelessness in his amiable but indecisive countenance. "I can see him now," wrote a friend quoted in Mrs. Drew's *Some Hawarden Letters*; "I can see him now, standing at the top of the great double staircase, torn with doubts which way to go down. 'The worst of this staircase,' he would say, 'is that there is absolutely no reason why one should go down one side rather than the other. What am I to do?'"

But though destiny is much a matter of chins, the Imp of Chance who comes in and steals our trousers

has no small part in determining our lives and shaping events. I have read that Wallenstein in his youth had a crack on the head which he, no doubt, felt was a misfortune, but it gave him just the surgical treatment that converted him from a dullard into a great general. Loyola got wounded in battle, and, thanks to that circumstance, found his true vocation and became the creator of the greatest religious order in history, and, with Luther, perhaps the greatest maker of history for six centuries. Newton, according to the legend, sees an apple fall and starts a train of thought that reveals one of the profoundest secrets of the universe. I suppose no one who has advanced far in life can fail to recall trifles that shaped the whole course of his career—a broken engagement, a misdirected letter, a chance meeting. At the time it seemed nothing, and now, in the retrospect, it is seen to have meant everything. The chin may dictate events within limits, but the Imp of Chance has as often as not the final word.

There is an interesting speculation on the theme of what might have happened in Mr. Asquith's book on the origin of the war. Referring to the appointment of Baron Marschall von Bieberstein as German Ambassador to London in 1912 and his death a few months later, he says that he is confident, so far as one can be confident in a matter of conjecture, that if Marschall had lived there would have been no European War in 1914. I fancy that is a common view in informed quarters. Marschall stood intellectually, as well as physically, head and shoulders above the petty men with whom the Kaiser had

surrounded himself, and it is inconceivable that he would have allowed his country to drift into war under an entire misapprehension as to the mind and power of England.

It is in this way that the chapter of accidents plays havoc with the affairs of men. All the woes of Ilium sprang from an elopement, and it is a commonplace that if Cleopatra's nose had been a shade longer—or shorter, for that matter—the whole story of the ancient world would have been altered. I suppose the most momentous political event in the history of the last thousand years was the rupture between England and America, which is said to have happened as the result of a shower of rain. But for that rupture, the British Commonwealth to-day would include the whole North American Continent, and its word would be sovereign over the earth. Perhaps the seat of authority would have been in Washington, instead of London, but wherever it was it would have stabilized this reeling world and given its people a security that now seems unattainable. The speculation which attributes the enormous calamity of the loss of America to a shower of rain is more fanciful, but hardly less reasonable, than that which Mr. Asquith advances in regard to the European War. The Earl of Bute was the evil genius of George III, and the inspiration of his disastrous policy. And the origin of his sinister power was a storm at Epsom which kept the royal party from going home. The Prince of Wales needed someone to make up a hand at cards to pass the time while the shower lasted, and Bute, then a young man, being handy, was selected, and

from that incident ingratiated himself with the Prince **and** still more with the Prince's wife. She established his influence over her son whom later, as George III, he led into the ruinous part of personal government which culminated in the Boston Tea Party, the War of Independence, and the Republic of the Stars and Stripes.

Chance does not, of course, always play a malevolent part like this. It sometimes works as if with a superb and beneficent design. Lincoln, on the threshold of fifty, regarded himself as having failed in life and he died at fifty-six, one of the world's immortals. It was the quite unimportant incident of his debate with Douglas that threw him into prominence on the eve of the crisis which, but for his wisdom and magnanimity, would have left America like Europe, a group of warring States. But in the end chance betrayed him. On the night he was murdered the faithful guardian who had shadowed and protected him throughout the war was sick, and his place was taken by a substitute who became absorbed in the play, and allowed Booth to slip unseen into the President's box and fire the fatal shot. But it might be argued that even in this felon betrayal, chance only completed the splendour of its design, for Lincoln's work was done, and it was the circumstances of his death that threw the nobility of the man into relief for all time.

And while the accidents of life so often seem to take control of events, it is no less true that our most deeply calculated schemes sometimes turn round and smite us. When Queen Victoria's eldest daughter

married the King of Prussia's eldest son, it was universally agreed that a grand thing had been done for the peace of the world, and when later a child was born, the rejoicings in London, as you may read in the contemporary records, were like those that welcome a great victory. That child was the ex-Kaiser William, now an exile in Holland. In the light of to-day those rejoicings of sixty odd years ago read like a grim comment on this queer and inexplicable world.

It is one of the agreeable ironies of the diverting adventure of life that our triumphs so often come clothed in misfortune and that the really big things that happen to us take the shape of trifles. Whenever we are tempted to inveigh against things that go wrong, we might do worse than remember the field-marshal's trousers.

THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR ¹

WE shall not know his name. It will never be known, and we should not seek to know it. For in that nameless figure that is borne over land and sea to mingle its dust with the most sacred dust of England, we salute the invisible hosts of the fallen. We do not ask his name or whence he comes. His name is legion and he comes from a hundred fields, stricken with a million deaths.

Gaily or sadly, he went out to battle. We see him, as in a vision, streaming in by a thousand roads,

¹ Written on the day of the interment of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey.

down from the Hebrides and the glens of the North, from the mines of Durham and the shipyards of the Clyde and Tyne and the bogs of Ireland, out of the factories of Lancashire and Yorkshire, up from the pastures of East Anglia and the moors of Devon, over the seas from distant lands, whither he had gone to live his life and whence he returns at the call of a duty that transcends life. In his speech we hear the echoes of a hundred countrysides, from the strong burr of Aberdeen to the lilt of Dorset and the broad-vowelled speech of Devon; but whatever the accent it mingles in that song about Tipperary which, by the strangest of ironies, lives in the mind with the sound of the tramp of millions to battle.

He takes a thousand shapes in our minds. We see him leaving the thatched cottage in some remote village, his widowed mother standing at the doorway and shading her eyes to catch the last glimpse of him as he turns into the high road that shuts him from her sight; we see him throwing aside his books and bounding out of school or college with the light of adventure in his eye; we see him closing his little shop, laying aside his pen, putting down mallet and chisel, hammer and axe. We see him taking a million pitiful farewells, his young wife hanging about his neck in an agony of grief, his little children weeping for they know not what, with that dread foreboding that is the affliction of childhood, the old people standing by with a sorrow that has passed beyond the relief of tears. Here he is the lover and there the son and there the husband and there the brother, but everywhere he is the sacrifice. While others remain

behind, perhaps to win ignoble riches and rewards, he goes out to live in mud and filth and die a lonely and horrible death far from his home and all that he loved.

And he is chosen, not because he is the tainted wether of the flock, meetest for sacrifice, but because he is the pride of the flock. In him we see the youth of England, all that is bravest and best and richest in promise, brains that could have won the priceless victories of peace, sinews that could have borne the burden of labour, singers and poets and statesmen in the green leaf, the Rupert Brookes, the Raymond Asquiths, the Gladstones, the Reelings, the finest flower of every household, all offered as a sacrifice on the insane and monstrous altar of war.

And with the mind's eye we follow him as he is swallowed up in the furnace. We see him falling on that desperate day at Suvla Bay, perishing in the deserts of Mesopotamia, struck down in the snow-storm on Vimy Ridge, dying on the hundred battle-fields of the Somme, disappearing in the sea of mud churned up at Passchendaele, falling like autumn leaves in the deadly salient of Ypres, stricken in those unforgettable days of March, when the Fifth Army broke before the German onset. His bones lie scattered over a thousand alien fields from the Euphrates to the Scheldt and lie on the floor of every wandering sea. From the Somme to Zeebrugge his cemeteries litter the landscape, and in those graves He the youth of England and the hearts of those who mourn.

Now one comes back, the **symbol** of all who have

died and who will never return. He comes, unknown and unnamed, to take his place among the illustrious dead. And it is no extravagant fancy to conceive the spirits of that great company, the Chathams and Drydens and Johnsons, poets, statesmen and warriors, receiving him into their midst in the solemn Abbey as something greater and more significant than they. For in him they will see the emblem of the mightiest tribute ever laid on the nation's altar. In him we do reverence to that generation of Britain's young manhood that perished in the world's madness and sleeps for ever in foreign lands.

None of us will look on that moving scene without emotion. But something more will be required of us than a spasm of easy, tearful emotion that exhausts itself in being felt. What have we, the living, to say to the dead who pass by in shadowy hosts? They died for no mean thing. They died that the world might be a better and cleaner place for those who lived and for those who come after. As that unknown soldier is borne down Whitehall he will issue a silent challenge to the living world to say whether it was worthy of his sacrifice. And if we are honest with ourselves we shall not find the answer easy.

A NIGHT'S LODGING

I AWOKE this morning with the sort of feeling a healthy child wakes with on Christmas Day. That is to say, I awoke with delight at the idea of getting up. I was in a strange bed in a strange city. I had arrived in the strange city late overnight, and had had

to take what lodging I could find. Until I lay down in my bed I had no idea how uncomfortable a bed could be. It was as cold as charity and as hard as a tax-gatherer. The bolster was the shape of a large round sausage, and the pillow was the shape of a sausage also. They were a relentless pair of ruffians, cold-hearted, passionless brutes, stolid and unresponsive, deaf alike to appeal or rebuke. I coaxed them with the flat of my hand, and they scowled unmoved; I smote them with my closed fist, and they took no more notice of it than if their name had been Dempsey.

I did not know that I could hate any inanimate thing so much as I hated that pillow and that bolster. I did not know that such oceans of blind anger were bottled up within me. I banged them against each other with savage joy. I threw them on the floor and danced and stamped on them. I knelt on them; I sat on them; finally I kicked them, not in the hope of doing them any good (hope had by this time died within me), but for the simple delight of kicking triè abominations.

Then, warmed with these various exercises, I put the things back and got into bed. It was as I expected. The mattress was a fit companion for the pillow and bolster. It lay like a newly ploughed field, every furrow deeply graven, every ridge with the edge of a dulled razor. It was not a field of warm loam or generous greensand that yielded to the touch. It was a field of stubborn Essex clay, cold and dank and merciless. The expanse was enormous. It seemed that during that measureless night I travelled

miles to and fro across the field in search of a furrow into which I could wedge myself. I tried it on the east side, and I tried it on the west, and I tried it all between. I tried it longitudinally; I tried it latitudinally; I tried it diagonally. The way with a bed like this, I said to myself, is not to *get* in the furrows, but to lie across the ridges. But when I did that I felt like a toad under the harrow, when "ilka tooth gies him a tig," and I resumed my search for a furrow that would give me a welcome.

In the intervals I slept and had wild dreams in which I met Apollyon straddling across my path. He came at me with fire belching from his nostrils, but I gave him a mighty thwack with a bolster I happened to be carrying, and he fell with an awful thud and split his head open on the ridge of the ploughed field where the combat occurred. I dare say I slept more than I imagined, for I share Lord Granville's view on the subject. Believing that he was a victim of insomnia, he took a house in Carlton House Terrace, within sound of Big Ben, and was comforted to find that, in spite of nights which seemed to pass without a wink of sleep, he only heard the great bell once or twice.

I did not do so well as that. As I fought with the furrows I heard all the night sounds of the strange city without—the ringing of tram bells, the jolting of wagons, the songs of revellers, and so on—die down until all was quiet. I dozed and wakened and wakened and dozed, praying for the dawn as fervently as ever Wellington prayed for Blucher. Once I dreamed that I had gone into Hell, and heard the cries of the souls in torment, and waking I found that

the strange city without was coming to life again with a jangle of hoots and whistles and screams. Perhaps, I felt, my dream was not very far wrong. I lay and listened to the mad chorus. I had never imagined that there could be so many whistles whistling with such different notes, high notes and low notes, clear notes and foggy notes, shrieking and growling like a whole menagerie of wild beasts hungering for blood. Intermittent noises began to be heard in the corridor. People were moving about. There was a swishing sound from the next room. A church clock outside began to strike, and I counted the strokes as a miser counts his money—one, two three, four, five, six, SEVEN. It seemed too good to be true. I punched the pillow to make certain I was awake, and, under the comfortable assurance that release was at hand, fell to sleep again in my furrowed field. When I woke next, the room was light. I leapt from bed and kicked the pillow joyfully across the room. But the bolster I subjected to no such indignity. After all, it had done me a good turn with Apollyon, and I called the account square.

Two hours later I am in the train fleeing from the strange city. I had never been to it before, and I dare say I shall never go to it again. But I shall always remember it as the City of Dreadful Night. I feel now that I, too, have been with ;Eneas into Hell. Perhaps it is unfair to the strange city. I dare say love and peace and beauty dwell there as abundantly as in most places. But I am content to leave the discovery of them to others.

ON COMING HOME

A FRIEND of mine found himself the other day on the platform of a country station in the south of Scotland near the sea-coast. A middle-aged couple were the only people visible, and they sat together on the single form provided for waiting passengers. They did not speak, but just sat and gazed at the rails, at the opposite platform, at the fields beyond, at the clouds above, at anything, in fact, within the range of vision. My friend went and sat beside them to wait for his train. Presently another person, a woman, appeared, and advancing to the other two, addressed them. She wondered what train the couple were waiting for. Was their holiday over?

"Oh, no," said the woman. "We've another week yet."

"Then maybe ye 're waiting for a friend?" spied the other.

"No," replied the woman. "We're juist sitting. We like to come here in the evening and see the trains come in and out. It's a change, and it makes us think of home. Eh," she said, with a sudden fervour that spoke of inward agonies, "you do miss your home comforts on a holiday."

I fancy this excellent woman, sitting on the platform to watch the trains go homeward, and yearning for the day to come when she will take a seat in one of them, disclosed a secret which many of us share, but few of us have the courage to confess. She was bored by her holiday. It was her annual Purgatory, her time of exile by the alien waters of Babylon.

There she sat while the commonplaces of her home life, her comfortable bed, the mysteries of her larder, the gossip of her neighbours, the dusting of the front parlour, the trials of shopping, her good man's going and returning, the mending of the children's stockings, and all the little somethings-and-nothings that made up her daily round, assumed a glamour and a pathos that familiarity had deadened. She had to go away from home to discover it again. She had to get out of her rut in order to find that she could not be happy anywhere else. Then she could say with Touchstone, "So this is the forest of Arden: well, when I was at home I was in a better place. "

It does not follow that her holiday was a failure. It was a most successful holiday. The main purpose of a holiday is to make us home-sick. We go to the forest of Arden in order that we may be reconciled to No. 14, Beulah Avenue, Peckham. We sit and throw stones on the beach in the sunshine until we get sick of doing nothing in particular, and dream of the 8.32 from Tooting as the children of Israel dreamed of the fat pastures of Canaan. We climb the Jungfrau and explore the solitudes of the glaciers so that we can recover the rapture of Clapham Common and the felicities of Hampstead Heath. * We endure the dreary formalities of hotel life and the petty larcenies of the boarding-house in order that we may enjoy with renewed zest the ease and liberties of our own fireside.

In short, we go on a holiday for the pleasure of coming back. The humiliating truth is, of course, providentially concealed from us. If it were not, we

should stay at home and never see it afresh through the pleasant medium of distance and separation. But no experience of past disillusionings dims the glow of the holiday emotion. I have no doubt that the couple on the platform set out from Auld Reekie with the delight of children let out from school. We all know the feeling. "Behold . . . Beyond . . ." cried young Ruskin when the distant vision of the snowy battlements of the Oberland first burst on his astonished eyes. "Behold . . . Beyond," we cry as we pile up the luggage and start on the happy pilgrimage. And the emotion is worth having, even though we know it will end in a sigh of relief when we reach No. 14, Beulah Avenue again and sink into the familiar arm-chair and mow the bit of lawn that has grown shaggy in our absence, and exchange reminiscences with No. 13 over the fence, and feel the pleasant web of habit enveloping us once more.

It is when the holiday is over that we begin to enjoy it. Then we come, as Gissing says, under the law that wills that the day must die before we can enjoy to the full its light and odour. We are never, by the perversity of our nature, quite so happy as we think we were after the event had become a memory, and no doubt by next spring the couple who sat on the station platform watching the homeward-bound trains with longing eyes will recall the gay holiday they had without a suspicion that they welcomed the end of it as children welcome release from school. The illusion will only mean that they are a little sick of home again, and that they need the violent medicine of a holiday to make them homesick once more.

'APPY 'EINRICH

THE waiter certainly was rather slow, or perhaps it was that we were hungry and impatient. In any case, I apologized to my guest, a young fellow home on leave, and explained that the waiter was entitled to be a little absent-minded, for he had lost two sons in the war and his only remaining son h'ad been invalided out of the army, a permanent wreck.

"He tells me," I said, "that the boy never talks about the war or his experiences. He just seems silent and numbed. All that they know is that he killed five Germans, and that he is sorry for one of them. It happened while he was on patrol. There had been a good deal of indignation at that part of the line because there had been cases reported in which 'hands up' had been a trick for ensnaring some of our men, and the order had been given that the signal was to be ignored and those making it shot at sight. It was twilight and a young German soldier was seen running forward with his hands up. The patrol fired and he fell. He was quite unarmed and alone. On his body they found letters from his sweetheart in England—old letters that he had apparently carried with him all through the war. They showed that he had been at work at some place in London and had been engaged to be married when the war broke out."

"Yes," said my companion, as the waiter came up with the fish. "Yes, when the enemy turns from an abstraction to an individual you generally find there 's something that makes you hate this

killing business. I don't know that I have felt more sorry for any man's death in this war than for that of a German.

"You've been to F——, haven't you? You know that bit of line north of the M——road that you reach by the communication trench that is always up to your knees in mud no matter how dry the weather is. You remember how close the lines are to each other at that point—not forty yards apart? I was there in a dull season."

"You were lucky," I said. "It isn't often dull there"

"No, but it was then. The Boche would drop over an occasional whiz-bang as a reminder, and he'd have his usual afternoon cock-shy over our heads at the last pinnacle standing on the ruins of the cathedral in the town behind us. But really there was nothing doing, and we got rather chummy with the fellows over the way. We'd put up a target for them, and they'd do the same for us. They'd got some decent singers among them, and we'd shout for the 'Hate' song or *Wacht am Rhein* or *Tannenbaum* or something of that sort, and they always obliged, and we gave them the best we had back;

"Yes, we got quite friendly, and one morning one of their men got up on the parapet over the way, bowed very low, and shouted 'Goot morning.' Our men answered, 'Morgen, Fritz. How goes it?' and so on. He was a big, fat fellow, with glasses, and a good-humoured face, and to our great **joy he began** to sing a song in broken **English**. And **after**

he had finished we called for more and he gave us more. He had a real gift for comedy; seemed one of those fellows who are sent into the world with their happiness ready made. He laughed a great gurgling laugh that made you laugh to hear it. Our chaps gave him no end of applause, and called for his name. He beamed and bowed, said 'Thank you, gentlemen,' and said that his name was Heinrich something or other.

"So we called him "Appy 'Einrich,' and whenever our men were bored and things had gone to sleep someone would sing out 'We want 'Einrich. Send us 'Appy 'Einrich to give us a song.¹ And up would come Heinrich on to the parapet, red and smiling and bowing like a prima donna. And off he would start with his programme. He always seemed willing and evidently greatly enjoyed his popularity with our fellows.

"This went on for some time, and then one day we got news that we were to be relieved at once. We were to clear out that night and our place was to be taken by a Scotch regiment. You need not be told that we were glad. Life in the trenches when there is nothing doing is about as deadly a weariness as man has invented. We got our kit together and when night fell and our relief had come we marched back under the stars through F———towards B———.

"We had been too much occupied with the prospect of release to give a thought to the fellows over the road or to Heinrich. I remembered him afterwards and hoped that someone had told the new men that Heinrich was a good sort and would always

give them a bit of fun, if he was asked, or even if he wasn't asked.

"Some weeks afterwards at B——I ran across a man in the Scotch regiment which had followed us in the trenches on the M——road, and we talked about things there. 'And how did you get on with Heinrich?' I asked. 'Heinrich?' he said, 'who is he?' 'Why, surely,' said I, 'you know Heinrich, the fat fellow across the way, who gets up on the parapet and says "Goot morning/" and sings comic songs?' 'Never heard of him,' he said. 'Ah,' I said, 'he would have heard we were relieved and didn't find you so responsive a crowd as we were.' 'Never heard of him,' he repeated—then, after a pause, he added, 'There was an incident the morning after we took over the line. Some of our fellows saw a bulky Boche climbing on to the parapet just across the way and had a little target practice, and he went down in a heap.' 'That was him,' I said, 'that was 'Appy 'Einrich. What a beastly business war is, and what ungrateful beggars we were to forget him!'

"Yes, a beastly business, killing men," he added. "I don't wonder the waiter's son doesn't want to talk about it. We shall all be glad to forget when we come out of hell."

ON WRITING AN ARTICLE

I WAS putting on my boots just now in what the novelists call "a brown study." There was no urgent reason for putting on my boots. I was not going out, and my slippers were much more comfortable.

But something had to be done. I wanted a subject for an article. Now if you are accustomed to writing articles for a living, you will know that sometimes the difficulty is not writing the article, but choosing a subject. It is not that subjects are so few: it is that they are so many. It is not poverty you suffer from, but an embarrassment of riches. You are like Buridan's ass. That wretched creature starved between two bundles of hay, because he could not make up his mind which bundle to turn to first. And in that he was not unlike many human beings. There was an eighteenth-century statesman, for example, who used to find it so difficult to make a choice that he would stand at his door looking up the street and down the street, and finally go inside again, because he couldn't decide whether to go up or down. He would stay indoors all the morning considering whether he should ride out or walk out, and he would spend all the afternoon regretting that he had done neither one nor the other.

I have always had a great deal of sympathy with that personage, for I share his temperamental indecision. I hate making up my mind. If I go into a shop to choose a pair of trousers my infirmity of purpose grows with every new sample that is shown me, and finally I choose the wrong thing in a fit of desperation. If the question is a place for a holiday, all the artifices of my family cannot extract from me a decided preference for any place in particular. Bournemouth? Certainly. How jolly that walk along the sands by Poole Harbour to Studland and over the hills to Swanage! But think of the

Lake District . . . and North Wales . . . and Devon . . . and Cornwall . . . and . . . I do not so much make decisions as drift into them or fall into them. I am what you might call an Eleventh Hour Man. I take a header or, rather, tumble in just as the clock is about to strike for the last time.

This common failing of indecision is not necessarily due to intellectual laziness. It may be due, as in the case of Goschen, to too clear a vision of all the aspects of a subject. "Goschen/" said a famous First Sea Lord, "was the cleverest man we ever had at the Admiralty, and the worst administrator. He saw so many sides to a question that we could never get anything done." A sense of responsibility, too, is a severe check on action. I doubt whether any one who has dealt with affairs ever made up his mind with more painful questionings than Lord Morley. I have heard him say how burdensome he found the India Office, because day by day he had to make irrevocable decisions. A certain adventurous recklessness is necessary for the man of affairs. Joseph Chamberlain had that quality. Mr. Churchill has it to-day. If it is controlled by high motives and a wide vision it is an incomparable gift. If it be a mere passion for having one's own way it is only the gift of the gambler.

But, you ask, what has this to do with putting on my boots? It is a reasonable question. I will tell you. For an hour I had paced my room in my slippers in search of a subject. I had looked out of the window over the sunlit valley, watched the smoke of a distant train vanishing towards the west,

observed the activities of the rooks in a neighbouring elm. I had pared my nails several times with absent-minded industry, and sharpened every pencil I had on me with elaborate care. But the more I pared my nails and the more I sharpened my pencils the more perplexed I grew as to the theme for an article. Subjects crowded on me, "not single spies, but in battalions." They jostled each other for preference, they clamoured for notice as I have seen the dock labourers clamouring for a job at the London docks. They held out their hands and cried, "Here am I: take me." And, distracted by their importunities and starving in the midst of plenty, I fished in my pocket for a pencil I had not sharpened. There wasn't one left.

It was at this moment that I remembered my boots. Yes, I would certainly put on my boots. There was nothing like putting on one's boots for helping one to make up one's mind. The act of stooping changed the current of the blood. You saw things in a new light—like the man who looked between his legs at Bolton Abbey, and cried to his friend: "Oh, look this way; it's extraordinary what a fresh view you get." So I fetched my boots and sat down to put them on.

The thing worked like a charm. For in my preoccupied condition I picked up my right boot first. Then mechanically I put it down and seized the left boot. "Now why," said I, "did I do that?" And then the fact flashed on me that all my life I had been putting on my left boot first. If you had asked me five minutes before which boot I put on

first, I should have said that there was no first about it; yet now I found I was in the grip of a habit so fixed that the attempt to put on my right boot first affected me like the scraping of a harsh pencil on a slate. The thing couldn't be done. The whole rhythm of habit would be put out of joint. I became interested. How, I wondered, do I put on my jacket? I rose, took it off, found that my right arm slipped automatically into its sleeve, tried the reverse process, discovered that it was as difficult as an unfamiliar gymnastic operation. Why, said I, I am a mere bundle of little habits of which I am unconscious. This thing must be looked into. And then came into my mind that fascinating book of Samuel Butler's on *Life and Habit*. Yes, certainly, here was a subject that would "go." I dismissed all the importunate beggars who had been clamouring in my mind, took out a pencil, seized a writing pad, and sat down to write on "The Force of Habit."

And here I am. I have got to the end of my article without reaching my subject. I have looked up and down the street so long that it is time to go indoors.

ON THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

IN one of those charming articles which he writes in *The New Statesman*, Mr. J. Arthur Thomson tells of the wonderful world of odours to which we are largely strangers. No doubt in an earlier existence we relied much more upon our noses for our food, our safety, and all that concerned us, and had a

highly developed faculty of smell which has become more or less atrophied.

"Fee, fie, fo, fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman,"

said the Giant in the story. But that was long ago. If we were left to the testimony of our noses we could not tell an Englishman from a hippopotamus. To the bee, on the other hand, with its two or three thousand olfactory pores, the world is primarily a world of smell. If we could question that wonderful creature we should find that it thought and talked of nothing but the odours of the field. We should find that it had a range of experience in that realm beyond our wildest imaginings. We should find that there are more smells in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

We talk of the world as if our sensations were the sum total of experience. But the truth is that there is an infinity of worlds outside our comprehension, worlds of vision and hearing and smell that are beyond our finite capacity, some so microscopic as to escape us at one end of the scale, some so vast and intangible as to escape us at the other end. I went into the garden just now to pick some strawberries. One of them tempted me forthwith by its ripe and luxuriant beauty. I bit into it and found it hollowed out in the centre, and in that luscious hollow was a colony of earwigs. For them that strawberry was the world, and a very jolly world too—abundance of food, a soft

bed to lie on, and a chamber of exquisite perfumes. What, I wondered, was the thought of the little creatures as their comfortable world was suddenly shattered by some vast, inexplicable power beyond the scope of their vision and understanding ? I could not help idly wondering whether the shell of our comfortable world has been broken by some power without which is as far beyond our apprehension as I was beyond the apprehension of the happy dwellers in the strawberries.

And it is not only the worlds which are peculiar to the myriad creatures of diverse instincts and faculties which are so strangely separate. We ourselves all dwell in worlds of infinite variety. I do not mean the social and professional worlds in which we move, though here, too, the world is not one but many. There is not much in common between the world as it appears to Sarah Ellen, who "runs" four looms in a Lancashire weaving shed during fifty-one weeks in the year, and my Lady Broadacres, who suns herself in Mayfair.

But I am speaking here of our individual world, the world of our private thought and emotions. My world is not your world, nor yours mine. We sit and talk with each other, we work together and play together, we exchange confidences and share our laughter and our experiences. But ultimately we can neither of us understand the world of the other—that world which is the sum of a million factors of unthinkable diversity, trifles light as air, memories, experiences, physical emotions, the play of light and colour and sound, attachments and

antipathies often so obscure that we cannot even explain them to ourselves. We may feel a collective emotion under the impulse of some powerful event or personality. We may ebb and flow as a tide to the rhythm of a great melody or to the incantation of noble oratory. The news of a great victory in these days would move us to our common centre and bring all our separate worlds into a mighty chorus of thanksgiving. But even in these common emotions there are infinite shades of difference, and when they have passed we subside again into the world where we dwell alone.

Most of us are doomed to go through life without communicating the mysteries of our experience.

**Alas for those who never sing,
But die with all their music in them.**

It is the privilege of the artist in any medium to enrich the general life with the consciousness of the world that he alone has experienced. He gives us new kingdoms for our inheritance, makes us the sharers of his visions, opens out wider horizons, and floods our life with richer glories.

I entered such a kingdom the other afternoon. I turned out of the Strand, which was thronged and throbbing with the news of the great advance,—it was the first day of the battle of the Somme—and entered the Aldwych Theatre. As if by magic, I passed from the thrilling drama of the present into a realm

Full of sweet dreams and health and quiet breathing—
into a sunlit world, where the zephyrs fan your

cheek like a benediction and the brooks tinkle through the gracious landscape and melody is on every bough and joy and peace are all about you—the idyllic world where the marvellous child, Mozart, reigns like an enchanter. What though the tale of *The Magic Flute* is foolish beyond words? Who cares for the tale? Who thinks of the tale? It is only the wand in the hand of the magician. Though it be but a broomstick, it will open all the magic casements of earth and heaven, it will surround us with the choirs invisible, and send us forth into green pastures and by the cool water-brooks.

That was Mozart's vision of the world in his brief but immortal journey through it. Perhaps it was only a dream world, but what a dream to live through! And to him it was as real a world as that of Mr. Gradgrind, whose vision is shut in by what Burns called "the raised edge of a bawbee." We must not think that our world is the only one. There are worlds outside our experience. "Call that a sunset?" said the lady to Turner as she stood before the artist's picture. "I never saw a sunset like that." "No, madam," said Turner. "Don't you wish you had?" Perhaps your world and mine is only mean because we are near-sighted. Perhaps we miss the vision not because the vision is not there, but because we darken the windows with dirty hangings.

ON A CITY THAT WAS

I SAW in a newspaper a few days ago some pictures of the ruins of the Cloth Hall and the Cathedral at Ypres. They were excellent photographs, but the impression they left on my mind was of the futility even of photography to convey any real sense of that astonishing scene of desolation which was once the beautiful city of Ypres. We talk of Ypres as if it were still a city in being, in which men trade, and children play, and women go about their household duties. In a vague way we feel that it is so. In a vague way I felt that it was so myself until I entered it and found myself in the presence of the ghost of a city.

How wonderful is the solitude and the silence in the midst of which it stands like the ruin of some ancient and forgotten civilization! Far behind you have left the hurry and tumult of the great armies—every village seething with a strange and tumultuous life, soldiers bargaining with the women for potatoes and cabbages in the market-place, boiling their pots in the fields, playing football by the wayside, mending the roads, marching, camping, feeding, sleeping; officers flying along the roads on horseback or in motor cars, vast processions of lorries coiling their way over the landscape, or standing at rest with their death-dealing burdens while the men take their midday meal; giant "caterpillars" dragging great guns along the highway. Everywhere the sense of a fearful urgency, everywhere

the feeling of a brooding and awful presence that overshadows the heavens with a cosmic menace. It is as though you are living on the slopes of some vast volcano whose eruptions may at any moment submerge all this phantasmal life in a sea of molten lava. And, hark! through the sounds of the roads and the streets, the chaffering of the market-place, the rush of motor cars, the rhythmic tramp of men, there comes a dull, hollow roar, as from the mouth of a volcano itself.

As you advance the scene changes. The movement becomes more feverish, more intense. The very breath of the volcano seems to fan your cheek, and the hollow roar has become near and plangent. It is no longer like the breaking of great seas on a distant shore: it is like thunder rending the sky above you. A little farther, and another subtle change is observable. On either hand the land has become solitary and unkempt. All the life of the fields has vanished and the soldiers are in undisputed possession. Then even the soldiers seem left behind, and you enter the strange solitude where the war is waged. Before you rises the great mound of Ypres. In the distance it looks like a living city with quaintly broken skyline, but as you approach you see that it is only the tomb of a city standing there desolate and shattered in the midst of a universal desolation.

It is midday as you pass through its streets, but there is no moving thing visible amidst the ruins. The very spirit of loneliness is about you—not the invigorating loneliness of the mountain tops, but

the sad loneliness of the grave. I have stood upon the ruins of Carthage, but even there I did not feel the same sense of solitude that I felt as I walked the streets of Ypres. There, at least, the birds were singing above you, and the Arab sat beside his camel on the grass in the sunshine. Here nature itself seems blasted by some dreadful flame of death. The streets preserve their contours, but on either side the houses stand like gaunt skeletons, roofless and shattered, fronts knocked out, floors smashed through or hanging in fragments, bedsteads tumbling down through the broken ceiling of the sitting-room, pictures askew on the tottering walls, household treasures a forlorn wreckage, hats still hanging on the hat-pegs, the table-cloth still laid, the fireplace lustreless with the ashes of the last fire. . . .

And in the centre of this scene of utter misery the Cathedral and the Cloth Hall, still towering above the general desolation, sublime even in their ruin, the roofs gone, the interiors a heap of rubbish—the rubbish of priceless things—the outer walls battered and broken, but standing as they have stood for centuries. Most wonderful of all, as I saw it, a single pinnacle of the Cloth Hall still standing above the wreck, slender and exquisitely carven, pointing like an accusing finger to the eternal tribunal. For long the Germans had been shelling that Finger of Ypres. They shelled it the afternoon I was there and filled the market-place with great masses of masonry from the walls. But they shelled it in vain, and as I left Ypres in the twilight, when the thunder of the guns had ceased, and

looked back on the great mound of "the city that was," I saw above the ruins the finger still pointing heavenward.

But if the solitude of Ypres is memorable, the silence is terrible. It is the silence of imminent and breathless things, full of strange secrets, thrilling with a fearful expectation, broken by sudden and shattering voices that speak and then are still—voices that seem to come out of the bowels of the earth near at hand and are answered by voices more distant, the vicious hiss of the shrapnel, the crisp rattle of the machine-guns, the roar of "Mother," that sounds like an invisible express train thundering through the sky above you. The solitude and the silence assume an oppressive significance. They are only the garment of the mighty mystery that envelops you. You feel that these dead walls have ears, eyes, and most potent voices, that you are not in the midst of a great loneliness, but that all around the earth is full of most tremendous secrets. And then you realize that the city that is as dead as Nineveh to the outward eye is the most vital city in the world.

One day it will rise from its ashes, its streets will resound once more with jest and laughter, its fires will be relit, and its chimneys will send forth the cheerful smoke. But its glory throughout all the ages will be the memory of the days when it stood a mound of ruins on the plain with its finger pointing in mute appeal to Heaven against the infamies of men.

THE CASE OF DEAN INGE

WE now know, from his own lips, what is wrong with Dean Inge. Nature has denied him the sense of music. He can neither sing nor make a joyful noise. He knows but two tunes, *God Save the King* and *John Peel*, and even these he, apparently, only recognizes from afar. All the rest of the universe of harmony is just a jumble of strange noises to him. The pealing of the organ and the thrilling song of the choristers convey nothing to his imprisoned soul as he sits in his stall at St. Paul's. The release of the spirit, that feeling of getting clear of the encumbering flesh and escaping to a realm where all the burden and the mystery of this unintelligible world seem like a rumour from afar, a tale of little meaning, never comes to him. Let us assume that the escape is an illusion. But what an illusion! What an experience to have missed! Can we wonder that the Dean is a sad man and utters mournful sounds?

Perhaps Shakespeare, with his passion for song, overshot the mark when he said that the man who has not music in his soul

Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils.

But there is a measure of truth in the axiom. We like complete men—men with all their spiritual limbs as well as all their physical limbs. We like them to have humour as well as gravity, to be able to sing as well as sigh, to love work and to love play, and not to be shut off from any part of the kingdom of the mind. No doubt the Dean will point out that many very

eminent men have shared his affliction, and we shall be bound to agree that it is dangerous to generalize in this matter, as in most things. I could conceive him making out a very good case for the non-musical brotherhood. There is, of course, the leading instance of that most human and beautiful of spirits, Charles Lamb, who was even more deficient than the Dean, for he did not know *God Save the King*. But then, unlike the Dean, he had the desire to sing. The spirit was there, but it could find no utterance. He had tried for years, he tells us, to learn *God Save the King*, humming it to himself in quiet corners and solitary places, without, according to his friends, coming "within several quavers of it." No, I do not think, on second thoughts, that we can allow the Dean to claim St. Charles. He was a trier, like Mr. Chesterton. No one would suggest that Mr. Chesterton was musical, but he has the spirit of song in him and in a chorus he is splendid. He emits an enormous and affable rumble that suggests an elephant doing a cake-walk, or large lumps of thunder bumping about irrelevantly in the basement of the harmony.

But the Dean may have Southey. He is surrendered freely and ungrudgingly. He certainly had no feeling for music and no desire to feel it. "You are alive to know what follows," he says, describing a play, "and lo!—down comes the curtain and the fiddles begin their abominations." The fiddles begin their abominations! Take Bob Southey out, good Dean, and relieve us of his unctuous presence. And I am afraid we must let the Dean have Scott, too,

though I part with him with sorrow. "I do not know and cannot utter a note of music," wrote Sir Walter; "and complicated harmonies seem to me a babble of confused though pleasing sounds." Pleasing, you observe. I am not sure that we cannot snatch Sir Walter from the Dean's clutches after all. We must part with Tennyson and Ruskin, neither of whom had the sense of music, and with Macaulay, who could only recognise one tune—*The Campbells are Coming*. But we cannot let the Dean have Coleridge, for though he disclaimed any understanding of complicated harmonies, he admits that he loved to hear Beethoven, and the man who could appreciate Beethoven a hundred years ago must not go in the Dean's gloomy galley.

Nor shall old Sam Johnson go there, though he confessed that he was insensible to the power of music. "I told him," says Boswell, "that it affected me to such a degree as to agitate my nerves painfully, producing in my mind alternate sensations of pathetic dejection, so that I was ready to shed tears, and of daring resolution, so that I was inclined to rush into the thickest part of the battle. 'Sir,' said he, 'I should never hear it if it made me such a fool.'" But I claim Samuel on the ground that during the tour in the Hebrides he heard with rapt attention the performance of the *Lament of the Scalded Cat*, and still more because at Ashbourne he listened patiently to a great number of tunes on the fiddle, and desired to have *Let Ambition fire thy Mind* played over again. It is a small thing, I own—a trivial ground on which to claim him. I have never heard *Let Ambition fire thy*

Mind, but the incident shows that Johnson had the root of the matter in him. Would the Dean, or Bob Southey, have asked to have *Let Ambition fire thy Mind* played over again? Would they have listened with rapt attention to *The Lament of the Scalded Cat*? Not they.

But even in the case of the Dean there is one pale, watery gleam of light in the general gloom. He knows *John Peel*. In his sombre heart that jolly song perhaps wakens some latent emotion of joy. It may be that with that key to the prison he might yet be rescued from his dungeon and turned into a happier man. Why should not the choir of St. Paul's try to convert him? Let them step across the Churchyard at night to the Dean's recess and ask in resonant chorus—

"D'ye ken John Peel wi' his coat so grey?
D'ye ken John Peel at the break of day?
D'ye ken John Peel when he 's far, far away
With his hounds and his horn in the morning? "

and go on asking until the Dean comes to the window with the response—

"Yes, I ken John Peel, and Ruby too,
Ranter and Ringwood, Bellman and True,
From a find to a cheak, from a cheak to a view,
From a view to a death in the morning."

And now, gentlemen, the chorus, if you please—
all together:

For the sound of his horn called me from my bed, etc.

It would be a great night in St. Paul's Churchyard, and it might do the Dean good. And we should all

rejoice to hear him make a joyful noise for a change, even though it could not be called music.

ON BEING IDLE

I HAVE long laboured under a dark suspicion that I am an idle person. It is an entirely private suspicion. If I chance to mention it in conversation, I do not expect to be believed. I announce that I am idle, in fact, to prevent the idea spreading that I am idle. The art of defence is attack. I defend myself by attacking myself, and claim a verdict of not guilty by the candour of my confession of guilt. I disarm you by laying down my arms. "Ah, ah," I expect you to say. "Ah, ah, you an idle person. Well, that is good." And if you do not say it I at least give myself the pleasure of believing that you think it.

This is not, I imagine, an uncommon artifice. Most of us say things about ourselves that we should not like to hear other people say about us. We say them in order that they may not be believed. In the same way some people find satisfaction in foretelling the probability of their early decease. They like to have the assurance that that event is as remote as it is undesirable. They enjoy the luxury of anticipating the sorrow it will inflict on others. We all like to feel we shall be missed. We all like to share the pathos of our own obsequies. I remember a nice old gentleman whose favourite topic was "When I am gone." One day he was telling his young grandson, as the child sat on his knee, what would happen when he was gone, and the young grandson looked up cheerfully and

said, "When you are gone, grandfather, shall I be at the funeral?" It was a devastating question, and, it was observed that afterwards the old gentleman never discussed his latter end with his formidable grandchild. He made it too painfully literal.

And if, after an assurance from me of my congenital idleness, you were to express regret at so unfortunate an affliction I should feel as sad as the old gentleman. I should feel that you were lacking in tact, and I dare say I should take care not to lay myself open again to such *gaucherie*. But in these articles I am happily free from this niggling self-deception. I can speak the plain truth about "Alpha of the Plough" without asking for any consideration for his feelings. I do not care how he suffers. And I say with confidence that he is an idle person. I was never more satisfied of the fact than at this moment. For hours he has been engaged in the agreeable task of dodging his duty to the *Star*.

It began quite early this morning—for you cannot help being about quite early now that the clock has been put forward—or is it back?—for summer-time. He first went up on to the hill behind the cottage, and there at the edge of the beech woods he lay down on the turf, resolved to write an article *en plein air*, as Corot used to paint his pictures—an article that would simply carry the intoxication of this May morning into Fleet Street, and set that stuffy thoroughfare carolling with larks, and make it green with the green and dappled wonder of the beech woods. But first of all he had to saturate himself with the sunshine. You cannot give out sunshine

until you have taken it in. That, said he, is plain to the meanest understanding. So he took it in. He just lay on his back and looked at the clouds sailing serenely in the blue. They were well worth looking at—large, fat, lazy clouds that drifted along silently and dreamily, like vast bales of wool being wafted from one star to another. He looked at them "long and long" as Walt Whitman used to say. How that loafer of genius, he said, would have loved to lie and look at those woolly clouds.

And before he had thoroughly examined the clouds he became absorbed in another task. There were the sounds to be considered. You could not have a picture of this May morning without the sounds. So he began enumerating the sounds that came up from the valley and the plain on the wings of the west wind. He had no idea what a lot of sounds one could hear if one gave one's mind to the task seriously. There was the thin whisper of the breeze in the grass on which he lay, the breathings of the woodland behind, the dry flutter of dead leaves from a dwarf beech near by, the boom of a bumble-bee that came blustering past, the song of the meadow pipit rising from the fields below, the shout of the cuckoo sailing up the valley, the clatter of magpies on the hill-Side, the "spink-spink" of the chaffinch, the whirr of a tractor in a distant field, the crowing of a far-off cock, the bark of a sheep-dog, the ring of an axe reverberating from a remote clearing in the beech woods, the voices of children who were gathering violets and bluebells in the wooded hollow on the other side of the hill. All these and many other

things he heard, still lying on his back and looking at the heavenly bales of wool. Their dreaminess affected him; their billowy softness invited to slumber. . . .

When he awoke he decided that it was too late to start an article then. Moreover, the best time to write an article was the afternoon, and the best place was the orchard, sitting under a cherry tree, with the blossoms falling at your feet like summer snow, and the bees about you preaching the stern lesson of labour. Yes, he would go to the bees. He would catch something of their fervour, their devotion to duty. They did not lie about on their backs in the sunshine looking at woolly clouds. To them, life was real, life was earnest. They were always "up and doing." It was true that there were the drones, impostors who make ten times the buzz of the workers, and would have you believe they do all the work because they make most of the noise. But the example of these lazy fellows he would ignore. Under the cherry tree he would labour like the honey bee.

But it happened that as he sat under the cherry tree the expert came out to look at the hives. She was quite capable of looking at the hives alone, but it seemed a civil thing to lend a hand at looking. So he plit on a veil and gloves and went and looked. It is astonishing how time flies when you are looking in bee-hives. There are so many things to do and see. You always like to find the queen, for example, to make sure that she is there, and to find one bee in thousands, takes time. It took more time than usual this afternoon, for there had been a tragedy in **one** of **the** hives. It was a nucleus hive, made up of

brood frames from other hives, and provided with a queen of our best breed. But no queen was visible. The frames were turned over industriously without reward. At last, on the floor of the hive, below the frames, her corpse was found. This deepened the mystery. Had the workers, for some obscure reason, rejected her sovereignty and killed her, or had a rival to the throne appeared and given her her quietus? The search was renewed, and at last the new queen was run to earth in the act of being fed by a couple of her subjects. She had been hatched from a queen cell that had escaped notice when the brood frames were put in and, according to the merciless law of the hive, had slain her senior. All this took time, and before he had finished, the cheerful clatter of tea things in the orchard announced another interruption of his task.

And to cut a long story short, the article he set out to write in praise of the May morning was not written at all. But perhaps this article about how it was not written will serve instead. It has at least one virtue. It exhales a moral as the rose exhales a perfume.

ON AN OFFER OF £10,000

I HAD a great and pleasurable shock this morning. I was deep in drab and perplexed thought about the muddle the world had got into and, incidentally, the muddle I was getting into myself, when the postman came and, among other things, brought me a letter from a gentleman named Rosen. I had never

heard of him before—I shouldn't know him if I met him. Yet he began in this cordial fashion: "Can I be of any service to you?" My heart leapt up at so friendly and handsome an inquiry. This was the sort of man I had dreamt of meeting all my life, a hearty, kindly fellow, full of melting charity, who only asked to be allowed to help a lame dog over the stile. I wondered who had told Mr. Rosen about me and induced him to sit down and write in this warm, generous spirit. Or perhaps he was a reader who had been touched by the articles of "Alpha of the Plough." I imagined him reading one of my most agreeable little things—one with just a hint of pathos in it perhaps—and turning to Mrs. Rosen and saying: "We ought to do something for this charming writer, my dear. What would you suggest?" And the sensible woman—just touching her eyes, I think, with the corner of her handkerchief—replied: "Why not write to him and ask what he would like?" And Mr. Rosen exclaimed: "Admirable woman! The very thing," and hastened to his desk and wrote forthwith.

But he did not stop at asking whether he could be of any service to me. With a fine sense of delicacy he raised a subject which he knew I might have some hesitation in mentioning myself. "He is sure, being a literary man, to be hard-up," he said to Mrs. R., "and you can tell he is a sensitive fellow who would starve rather than say anything about it. We must make it easy for him to tell us all about it." And Mrs. R., her eyes shining through her tears—for she is a soft-hearted woman—said: "Yes, poor fellow, make it easy for him." So Mr. Rosen, his heart warming

towards me, went on: "If an immediate sum of money, £50 to £10,000, would be useful, you can have same at *first interview or per registered post* upon your note of hand: i.e. without security."

When I read this I was amazed. How had he hit the sum so perfectly? Why, it was precisely something between £50 and £10,000—rather nearer £10,000 than £50—that I *did* want. It seemed like manna dropping from heaven. I called to Jane up the stairs and asked her to come and hear of the splendid luck that had befallen us. I declaimed the letter to her in loud and joyous tones. "However can he have heard of us?" she said. "But I wish he wouldn't say 'same.'" "We must not look a gift-horse in the mouth," I said severely. "These noble-hearted people always say 'same.' 'We send same by even post,' they say, 'but if same is not satisfactory, we will take same back and return money for same.' It is very clear and saves time. We must not be fastidious. We must not let our little literary niceties stand in the way of £10,000. I think I shall take the £10,000. He doesn't seem to mind whether it's £50 or £10,000 and I mind a great deal."

Jane thought we ought to see the Rosens first, to make sure there was not a mistake. It would be odious if we wrote accepting, took the money, spent it, and then found it was meant for someone else of the same name, who probably needed it more. I said I thought Mr. Rosen would not like this cold and calculating way of meeting his friendly advances. I had now a clear perception of him. He was an elderly, big-hearted man with a flowing white beard.

He wanted to do a little good in the world before he left it, and he had chosen me as the humble vessel of his benefaction because he liked my articles in the *Star*. What need was there to go prying into his motives further? He would certainly not like it. He did not want the thing to be talked about. "Please retain the card (enclosed) as a guarantee of absolute secrecy," he said in his letter. That showed the sort of man he was. He did good by stealth. It was our plain duty to respect his wishes. If he did not want the matter talked about, why should we worry him with inquiries?

I think this consideration had great weight with Jane and removed any lingering scruples she had about taking the money. She accepted my view of Mr. Rosen as a venerable old gentleman of the Cheeryble type who wanted to make people happy, and she agreed that we ought not to put obstacles in his way. In the evening we went for a walk down New Bond Street, where the dear old man lives, and took a survey of the premises of our fairy godfather from the other side of the road. I fancy we caught a glimpse of him at the window, with flowing white beard and skull-cap and velvet jacket and gold-rimmed spectacles, through which his eyes beamed with benevolence upon the passers-by. To-morrow I think I will write and tell him I will accept his kind offer of service. Or perhaps I will call, for the post is very uncertain. But I don't think I will take the £10,000. It would look grasping. I think I will ask him for £5,000. And I will promise him, of course, "absolute secrecy."

ON HABITS

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

Then it occurred to me that I was in conflict with a habit. It is my practice to do my writing with a pencil. Days, even weeks, pass without my using a pen for anything more than signing my name. On the other hand there are not many hours of the day when I am without a pencil between thumb and finger. It has become a part of my organism as it were, a mere extension of my hand. There, at the top of my second ringer, is a little bump, raised in its

service, a monument erected by the friction of a whole forest of pencils that I have worn to the stump. A pencil is to me what his sword was to D'Artagnan, or his umbrella was to the Duke of Cambridge, or his cheroot was to Grant, or whittling a stick was to Jackson or—in short, what any habit is to anybody. Put a pencil in my hand, seat me before a blank writing pad in an empty room, and I am, as they say of the children, as good as gold. I tick on as tranquilly as an eight-day clock. I may be dismissed from the mind, ignored, forgotten. But the magic wand must be a pencil. Here was I sitting with a pen in my hand, and the whole complex of habit was disturbed. I was in an atmosphere of strangeness. The pen kept intruding between me and my thoughts. It was unfamiliar to the touch. It seemed to write a foreign language in which nothing pleased me.

This tyranny of little habits which is familiar to all of us is nowhere better described than in the story which Sir Walter Scott told to Rogers of his school days. "There was," he said, "a boy in my class at school who stood always at the top, nor could I with all my effort supplant him. Day came after day and still he kept his place, do what I would; till at length I observed that, when a question was asked him, he always fumbled with his fingers at a particular button in the lower part of his waistcoat. To remove it, therefore, became expedient in my eye, and in an evil moment it was removed with a knife. Great was my anxiety to know the success of my measure; and it succeeded too well. When

the boy was again questioned his fingers sought again for the button, but it was not to be found. In his distress he looked down for it—it was to be seen no more than to be felt. He stood confounded, and I took possession of his place; nor did he ever recover it, or ever, I believe, suspect who was the author of his wrong. Often in after-life has the sight of him smote me as I passed by him, and often have I resolved to make him some reparation; but it ended in good resolutions. Though I never renewed my acquaintance with him, I often saw him, for he filled some inferior office in one of the courts of law at Edinburgh. Poor fellow! I believe he is dead; he took early to drinking."

It was rather a shabby trick of young Scott's, and all one can say in regard to its unhappy consequences is that a boy so delicately balanced and so permanently undermined by a trifle would in any case have come to grief in this rough world. There is no harm in cultivating habits, so long as they are not injurious habits. Indeed, most of us are little more than bundles of habits neatly done up in coat and trousers. Take away our habits and the residuum would hardly be worth bothering about. We could not get on without them. They simplify the mechanism of life. They enable us to do a multitude of things automatically which, if we had to give fresh and original thought to them each time, would make existence an impossible confusion. The more we can regularize our commonplace activities by habit, the smoother our path and the more leisure we command. To take a simple case. I belong to a club, large but not

so large as to necessitate attendants in the cloakroom. You hang up your own hat and coat and take them down when you want them. For a long time it was my practice to hang them anywhere where there was a vacant hook and to take no note of the place. When I sought them I found it absurdly difficult to find them in the midst of so many similar hats and coats. Memory did not help me, for memory refused to burden itself with such trumpery things, and so daily after lunch I might be seen wandering forlornly and vacuously between the rows and rows of clothes in search of my own garments, murmuring, "Where *did* I put my hat?" Then one day a brilliant inspiration seized me. I would always hang my coat and hat on a certain peg, or if that were occupied, on the vacant peg nearest to it. It needed a few days to form the habit, but once formed it worked like a charm. I can find my hat and coat without thinking about finding them. I go to them as unerringly as a bird to its nest, or an arrow to its mark. It is one of the unequivocal triumphs of my life.

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

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

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

CHUM

WHEN I turned the key in the door and entered the cottage, I missed a familiar sound. It was the "thump, thump, thump," of a tail on the floor at the foot of the stairs. I turned on the light. Yes,

the place was vacant. Chum had gone, and he would not return. I knew that the veterinary must have called, pronounced his case hopeless, and taken him away, and that I should hear no more his "welcome home!" at midnight. No matter what the labours of the day had been or how profound his sleep, he never failed to give me a cheer with the stump of his tail and to blink his eyes sleepily as I gave him "Good dog" and a pat on the head. Then with a huge sigh of content he would lapse back into slumber, satisfied that the last duty of the day was done, and that all was well with the world for the night. Now he has lapsed into sleep altogether.

I think that instead of going into the beech woods this morning I will pay my old friend a little tribute at parting. It will ease my mind, and in any case I should find the woods lonely to-day, for it was there that I enjoyed his companionship most. And it was there, I think, that he enjoyed my companionship most also. He was a little particular with whom he went, and I fancy he preferred me to anybody. Children he declined to go with, unless they were accompanied by a responsible grown-up person. It was not that he did not love children. When little Peggy returned after a longish absence his transports of joy knew no bounds. He would leap round and round in wild circles culminating in an embrace that sent her to the floor. For he was a big fellow, and was rather like Scott's schoolmaster who, when he knocked young Scott down, apologized, and explained that "he didn't know his own strength."

But when he went into the woods Chum liked an

equal to go with, and I was the man for his money. He knew my favourite paths through the woodlands, and flashed hither and thither to his familiar haunts his reddish-brown coat gleaming through the trees like an oriflamme of Pan, and his head down to the ground like a hound on the trail. For there was more than a hint of the hound in his varied composition. What he was precisely no one ever could tell me. Even the veterinary gave him up. His fine liquid brown eyes and eloquent eyebrows were pure Airedale, but he had a nobler head than any Airedale I have known. There was a strain of the Irish terrier in him, too, but the glory of his smooth ruddy coat was all his own. And all his own, too, were his honest, simple heart and his genius for friendship.

There was no cunning about the fellow, and I fancy that in dogdom he was reckoned something of a fool. You could always tell when he had been sleeping in the arm-chair that was forbidden to him by the look of grotesque criminality that he wore. For he had an acute sense of sin, and he was too ingenuous for concealment. He was as sentimental as a schoolgirl, and could put as much emotion into the play of his wonderful eyebrows as any actor that ever walked the stage. In temperament, he was something of a pacifist. He would strike, but only under compulsion, and when he passed the Great Dane down in the valley he was a spectacle of abject surrender and slinking humbleness. His self-pity under pain was ludicrous, and he exploited it as openly as a beggar exploits his sores. You had but to speak sympathetically to him, to show any concern

about his affliction, whatever it might chance to be, and he would limp off to the forbidden arm-chair with the confidence of a convalescent entitled to any good thing that was going. And there he would he curled up and watchful, his eyes blinking with mingled joy at the unaccustomed luxury and pity for the misfortune that was the source of that joy. He had the qualities of a rather impressionable child. Scold him and he sank into an unspeakable abyss of misery; pat him or only change the tone of your voice and all the world was young and full of singing birds again.

He was, I fear, a snob. He had not that haughty aloofness from his kind, that suggestion of being someone in particular which afflicts the Chow. For him a dog was a dog whatever his pedigree, his coat, his breed, or his colour. But in his relations to the human family he revealed more than a little of the spirit of the flunkey. "A man's a man, for a' that," was not his creed. He discriminated between the people who came to the front door and the people who came to the side door. To the former he was systematically civil; to the latter he was frankly hostile. "The poor in a loomp is bad," was his fixed principle, and any one carrying a basket, wearing an apron, clothed in a uniform was *ipso facto* suspect. He held, in short, to the servile philosophy of clothes as firmly as any waiter at the Ritz or any footman in Mayfair. Familiarity never altered his convictions. No amount of correction affected his stubborn dislike of postmen. They offended him in many ways. They wore uniforms; they came, nevertheless, to the front door; they knocked with a challenging violence

that revolted his sense of propriety. In the end, the burden of their insults was too much for him. He took a sample out of a postman's pair of trousers. Perhaps that incident was not unconnected with his passing.

One day he limped into the garden, dragging his hind legs painfully. Whether he had been run over by a motor car or had fallen back in leaping a stile—he could take a gate with the grace of a swallow—or had had a crack across the back with a pole we never knew. Perhaps the latter, for he had enemies, and I am bound to say deserved to have them, for he was a disobedient fellow, and would go where he was not wanted. But whatever the cause he just wilted away at the hindquarters, and all the veterinary's art was in vain. The magic word that called him to the revels in his native woods—for he had come to us as a pup from a cottage in the heart of the woodland country—no longer made him tense as a drawn bow. He saw the cows in the paddock without indignation, and left his bone unregarded. He made one or two efforts to follow me up the hill to the woods, but at the corner of the lane turned back, crept into the house, and lay under the table as if desiring only to forget and to be forgotten. Now he is gone, and I am astonished to find how large a place he filled in the circle of my friendships. If the Indian's dream of the happy hunting ground is true, I fancy I shall find Chum there waiting to scour the woods with me as of old.

ON BOILERS AND BUTTERFLIES

I WENT recently to an industrial town in the North on some business, and while there had occasion to meet a man who manufactured boilers and engines and machinery of all sorts. He talked to me about boilers and engines and machinery of all sorts, and I did my best to appear interested and understanding. But I was neither one nor the other. I was only bored. Boilers and engines, I know, are important things. Compared with a boiler, the finest lyric that was ever written is only a perfume on the gale. There is a practical downrightness about a boiler that makes *Drink to me only with thine eyes*, or *O mistress mine, where are you roaming?* or even *Twelfth Night* itself, a mere idle frivolity. All you can say in favour of *Twelfth Night*, from the strictly business point of view, is that it doesn't wear out, and the boiler does. Thank Heaven for that.

But though boilers and engines are undoubtedly important things, I can never feel any enthusiasm about them. I know I ought to. I know I ought to be grateful to them for all the privileges they confer on me. How, for example, could I have gone to that-distant town without the help of a boiler? How—and this was still more important—how could I hope to *get* away from that distant town without the help of a boiler? But gratitude will not keep pace with obligation, and the fact remains that great as my debt is to machinery, I dislike personal contact with it as much as I dislike the east wind. It gives the same feeling of arid discomfort, of mental depression,

of spiritual bleakness. It has no bowels of compassion. It is power divorced from feeling and is the symbol of brute force in a world that lives or perishes by its emotional values. In Dante's *Inferno* each sinner had a hell peculiarly adapted to give him the maximum of misery. He would have reserved a machine-room for me, and there I should have wandered forlornly for ever and ever among wheels and pulleys and piston-rods and boilers, vainly trying amidst the thud and din of machinery and the nauseous reek of oily "waste" to catch those perfumes on the gale, those frivolous rhythms to which I had devoted so much of that life which should be "real and earnest" and occupied with serious things like boilers. And so it came about that as my friend talked I spiritually wilted away. I did not seem to be listening to a man. I seemed to be listening to a learned and articulate boiler.

Then something happened. I do not recall what it was; but it led from boilers to butterflies. The transition seems a little violent and inexplicable. The only connection I can see is that there is a "b" in boilers and a "b" in butterflies. But, whatever the cause, the effect was miraculous. The articulate boiler became suddenly a flaming spirit. The light of passion shone in his eyes. He no longer looked at me as if I were a fellow-boiler; but as if I were his long-lost and dearly-loved brother. Was I interested in butterflies? Then away with boilers! Come, I must see his butterflies. And off we went as fast as petrol could whisk us to his house in the suburbs, **and** there in a great room, surrounded with hundreds

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of cases and drawers, I saw butterflies from the ends of the earth, butterflies from the forests of Brazil and butterflies from the plains of India, and butterflies from the veldt of South Africa and butterflies from the bush of Australia, all arranged in the foliage natural to their habitat to show how their scheme of coloration conformed to their setting. Some of them had their wings folded back and were indistinguishable from the leaves among which they lay. And as my friend, with growing excitement, revealed his treasure, he talked of his adventures in the pursuit of them, and of the law of natural selection and all its bearing upon the mystery of life, its survivals and its failures. This hobby of his was, in short, the key of his world. The boiler house was the prison where he did time. At the magic word "butterflies" the prison door opened, and out he sailed on the wings of passion in pursuit of the things of the mind.

There are some people who speak slightly of hobbies as if they were something childish and frivolous. But a man without a hobby is like a ship without a rudder. Life is such a tumultuous and confused affair that most of us get lost in the tangle and brushwood and get to the end of the journey without ever having found a path and a sense of direction. But a hobby hits the path at once. It may be ever so trivial a thing, but it supplies what the mind needs, a disinterested enthusiasm outside the mere routine of work and play. You cannot tell where it will lead. You may begin with stamps, and find you are thinking in continents. You may collect coins, and find that the history of man is

written on them. You may begin with bees, and end with the science of life. Ruskin began with pictures and found they led to economics and everything else. For as every road was said to lead to Rome, so every hobby leads out into the universe, and supplies us with a compass for the adventure. It saves us from the humiliation of being merely smatterers. We cannot help being smatterers in general, for the world is too full of things to permit us to be anything else, but one field of intensive culture will give even our smattering a respectable foundation.

It will do more. It will save our smattering from folly. No man who knows even one subject well, will ever be quite such a fool as he might be when he comes to subjects he does not know. He will know he does not know them and that is the beginning of wisdom. He will have a scale of measurement* which will enable him to take soundings in strange waters. He will have, above all, an attachment to life which will make him at home in the world. Most of us need some such anchorage. We are plunged into this bewildering whirlpool of consciousness to be the sport of circumstance. We have in us the genius of speculation, but the further our speculations penetrate the profounder becomes the mystery that baffles us. We are caught in the toils of affections that crumble to dust, indoctrinated with creeds that wither like grass, beaten about by storms that shatter our stoutest battlements like spray blown upon the wind. In the end, we suspect that we are little more than dreams within a dream—or as Carlyle

puts it, "exhalations that are and then are not."
And we share the poet's sense of exile—

In this house with starry dome,
Floored with gem-like lakes and seas,
Shall I never be at home?
Never wholly at my ease?

From this spiritual loneliness there are various ways of escape, from stoicism to hedonism, but one of the most rational and kindly is the hobby. It brings us back from the perplexing conundrum of life to things that we can see and grasp and live with cheerfully and companionably and without fear of bereavement or disillusion. We cultivate our garden and find in it a modest answer to our questions. We see the seasons come and go like old friends whose visits may be fleeting, but are always renewed. Or we make friends in books, and live in easy comradeship with Horace or Pepys or Johnson in some static past that is untouched by the sense of the mortality of things. Or we find in music or art a garden of the mind, self-contained and self-sufficing, in which the anarchy of intractable circumstance is subdued to an inner harmony that calms the spirit and endows it with more sovereign vision. The old gentleman in *Romany Rye* you will remember, found his deliverance in studying Chinese. His bereavement had left him without God and without hope in the world, without any refuge except the pitiful contemplation of the things that reminded him of his sorrow. One day he sat gazing vacantly before him, when his eye fell upon some strange marks on a teapot, and he thought he heard a voice

say, "The marks! the marks! cling to the marks! or——" And from this beginning—but the story is too fruity, too rich with the vintage of Borrow to be mutilated. Take the book down, turn to the episode, and thank me for sending you again into the enchanted Borrovian realm that is so unlike anything else to be found in books. It is enough for the purpose here to recall this perfect example of the healing power of the hobby. It gives us an intelligible little world of our own where we can be at ease, and from whose warmth and friendliness we can look out on the vast conundrum without expecting an answer or being much troubled because we do not get one. It was a hobby that poor Pascal needed to allay that horror of the universe which he expressed in the desolating phrase, "*Le silence eternal de ces espaces infinis m'effraie.*" For on the wings of the butterfly one can not only outrange the boiler, but can adventure into the infinite in the spirit of happy and confident adventure.

ON THE INDIFFERENCE OF NATURE

THERE has never, I suppose, been a time when the moon had such a vogue as during the past ten days. For centuries, for thousands of years, for I know not what uncounted ages, she has been sailing the sky, "clustered around by all her starry fays." She has seen this tragi-comedy of man since the beginning, and I dare say will outlive its end. What she thinks of it all we shall never know. Perhaps she laughs at it, perhaps she weeps over it, perhaps she does

both in turns, as you and I do. Perhaps she is only indifferent. Yes, I suppose she is indifferent, for she holds up her lamp for the just and the unjust and lights the assassin's way as readily as the lover's and the shepherd's.

But in all her timeless journeyings around this flying ball to which we cling with our feet she has never been a subject of such painful concern as now. Lovesick poets have sung of her, and learned men have studied her countenance and made maps of her hills and her valleys, and children have been lulled to sleep with legends of the old man in the moon and the old woman eternally gathering her eternal sticks. But for most of us she had no more serious import than a Chinese lantern hung on a Christmas tree to please the children.

And suddenly she has become the most sensational fact of our lives. From the king in his palace to the pauper in his workhouse we have all been talking of the moon, and watching the moon and studying the phases of the moon. There are seven millions of Londoners who know more about the moon to-day than they ever dreamed there was to be known, or than they ever dreamed that they would want to know. John Bright once said that the only virtue of war was that it taught people geography, but even he did not think of the geography of the moon and of the firmament. But in the intense school of these days we are learning about everything in heaven above and in the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth. Count Zeppelin taught us about the stars, and now Herr von Gotha

is giving us a lesson on the moon. We are not so grateful as we might be.

But the main lesson we are all learning, I think, is that Nature does not take sides in our affairs. We all like to think that she does take sides—that is, our side—that a special providence watches over us, and that invisible powers will see us through. It is a common weakness. The preposterous Kaiser exhibits it in its most grotesque assumption. He does really believe—or did, for dreadful doubts must be invading the armour-plated vanity of this jerry-built Caesar—that God and Nature are his Imperial agents.

And in a less degree most of us, in times of stress, pin our faith to some special providence. We are so important to ourselves that we cannot conceive that we are unimportant to whatever powers there be. Others may fall, but we have charmed lives. Our cause must prevail because, being ours, it is beyond mortal challenge. A distinguished general was telling me not long ago of an incident in the second battle of Ypres. He stood with another general, since killed, watching the battle at its most critical phase. They saw the British line yield, and the Germans advance, and all seemed over. My friend put up his glasses with the gesture of one who knew the worst had come. His companion turned to him and said, "God will never allow those——to win." It was an odd expression of faith, but it represents the conviction latent in most of us that we can count on invisible allies who, like the goddess in Homer, will intervene if we are in straits, and fling a cloud between us and the foe.

This reliance on the supernatural is one of the sources of power in men of primitive and intense faith. Cromwell was a practical mystic and never forgot to keep his powder dry, but he saw the hand of the Lord visibly at work for his cause in the winds and the tempest, and that conviction added a fervour to his terrible sword. In his letter to Speaker Lenthall on the battle of Dunbar he tells how in marching from Musselburgh to Haddington the enemy fell upon "the rear-forlorn of our horse" and "had like to have engaged our rear-brigade of horse with their whole army—*had not the Lord by His Providence put a cloud over the Moon*, hereby giving us opportunity to draw off those horse to the rest of our army."

In the same way Elizabethan England witnessed God Himself in the tempest that scattered the Armada, and a hundred years later the people saw the same Divine sanction in the winds that brought William Prince of Orange to our shores and drove his pursuers away. "The weather had indeed served the Protestant cause so well," says Macaulay, "that some men of more piety than judgment fully believed the ordinary laws of nature to have been suspended for the preservation of the liberty and religion of England. Exactly a hundred years before, they said, the Armada, invincible by man, had been scattered by the wrath of God. Civil freedom and divine truth were again in jeopardy; and again the obedient elements had fought for the good cause. The wind had blown strong from the east while the Prince wished to sail down the Channel, had turned to the south when, he wished to enter Torbay, and

sunk to a calm during the disembarkation, and, as soon as the disembarkation was completed, had risen to a storm and had met the pursuers in the face."

If we saw such a sequence of winds blowing for our cause we should, in spite of Macaulay, allow our piety to have the better of our judgment. Indeed, there have been those who in the absence of more solid evidence have accepted the Angels at Mons with as touching and unquestioning a faith as they accepted the legend of the army of Russians from Archangel. Perhaps it is not "piety" so much as anxiety that accounts for this credulity. In its more degraded form it is responsible for such phenomena as the revival of fortune telling and the emergence of the Prophet Bottomley. In its more reputable expression it springs from the conviction of the justice of our cause, of the dominion of the spiritual over the material and of the witness of that dominion in the operations of Nature.

Then comes this wonderful harvest moon with its clear sky and its still air to light our enemies to their villainous work and to remind us that, however virtuous our cause, Nature is not concerned about us. She is indifferent whether we win or lose. She is not against us, but she is not for us. Sometimes she helps the enemy, and sometimes she helps us. She blew a snowstorm in the face of the Germans on the most critical day of Verdun, and helped to defeat that great adventure. In August last she came out on the side of the enemy. She rained and blew ceaselessly, and disarranged our plans in Flanders, so that the attack on which so much depended was

driven perilously late into the year. And even the brilliant moon and the cloudless nights that have been so disturbing to us in London speak the same language of Nature's impartiality. They serve the enemy here, but they are serving us far more just across the sea, where every bright day and moonlit night snatched from the mud and rain of the coming winter is of priceless value to our army. That consideration should enable us to bear our affliction with fortitude as we crowd the "tubes" or listen from under the domestic table to the roar of the guns.

But we must admit, on the evidence, that Nature does not care twopence who wins, and is as unconcerned about our affairs as we are about the affairs of a nest of ants that we tread on without knowing that we have trodden on it. She is beyond good and evil. She has no morals and is indifferent about justice and what men call right and wrong. She blasts the wise and leaves the foolish to flourish.

Nature, with equal mind
Sees all her sons at play;
Sees man control the wind,
The wind sweep man away;
Allows the proudly riding and the found 'ring barque.

It is a chill, but a chastening thought. It leaves us with a sense of loneliness, but it brings with it, also, a sense of power, the power of the unconquerable human spirit, self-dependent and self-reliant, reaching out to ideals beyond itself, beyond its highest hope of attainment, broken on the wheel of intractable things, but still stumbling forward by its half-lights

in search of some Land of Promise that always skips just beyond the horizon.

Happily the moon is skipping beyond the horizon too. Frankly, we have seen enough of her face to last us for a long time. When she comes again let her clothe herself in good fat clouds and bring the winds in her train. We do not like to think of her as a mere flunkey of the Kaiser and the torch-bearer of his assassins.

ALL ABOUT A DOG

IT was a bitterly cold night, and even at the far end of the bus the east wind that raved along the street cut like a knife. The bus stopped, and two women and a man got in together and filled the vacant places. The younger woman was dressed in sealskin, and carried one of those little Pekinese dogs that women in sealskin like to carry in their laps. The conductor came in and took the fares. Then his eye rested with cold malice on the beady-eyed toy dog. I saw trouble brewing. This was the opportunity for which he had been waiting, and he intended to make the most of it. (I had marked him as the type of what Mr. Wells has called the Resentful Employee, the man with a general vague grievance against everything and a particular grievance against passengers who came and sat in his bus while he shivered at the door.)

"You must take that dog out," he said with sour venom.

"I shall certainly do nothing of the kind. You can

take my name and address," said the woman, who had evidently expected the challenge and knew the reply.

"You must take that dog out—that 's my orders."

"I won't go on the top in such weather. It would kill me," said the woman.

"Certainly not," said her lady companion. "You've got a cough as it is."

"It's nonsense," said her male companion.

The conductor pulled the bell and the bus stopped. "This bus doesn't go on until that dog is brought out." And he stepped on to the pavement and waited. It was his moment of triumph. He had the law on his side and a whole busful of angry people under the harrow. His embittered soul was having a real holiday.

The storm inside rose high. "Shameful"; "He 's no better than a German"; "Why isn't he in the army?"; "Call the police"; "Let 's all report him"; "Let's make him give us our fares back"; "Yes, that's it, let's make him give us our fares back." For everybody was on the side of the lady and the dog.

That little animal sat blinking at the dim lights in happy unconsciousness of the rumpus of which he -was the cause.

The conductor came to the door. "What's your number?" said one, taking out a pocket-book with a gesture of terrible things. "There 's my number," said the conductor imperturbably. "Give us our fares back—you Ve engaged to carry us—you can't leave us here all night." "No fares back," said the conductor.

Two or three passengers got out and disappeared into the night. The conductor took another turn on the pavement, then went and had a talk with the driver. Another bus, the last on the road, sailed by indifferent to the shouts of the passengers to stop. "They stick by each other—the villains," was the comment.

Someone pulled the bell violently. That brought the driver round to the door. "Who's conductor of this bus?" he said, and paused for a reply. None coming, he returned to his seat and resumed beating his arms across his chest. There was no hope in that quarter. A policeman strolled up and looked in at the door. An avalanche of indignant protests and appeals burst on him. "Well, he's got his rules, you know," he said genially. "Give your name and address." "That's what he's been offered, and he won't take it." "Oh," said the policeman, and he went away and took his stand a few yards down the street, where he was joined by two more constables.

And still the little dog blinked at the lights, and the conductor walked to and fro on the pavement, like a captain on the quarter-deck in the hour of victory. A young woman, whose voice had risen high above the gale inside, descended on him with an air of threatening and slaughter. He was immovable—as cold as the night and hard as the pavement. She passed on in a fury of impotence to the three policemen, who stood like a group of statuary up the street watching the drama. Then she came back, imperiously beckoned to her "young man" who had sat a silent witness of her rage, and vanished.

Others followed. The bus was emptying. Even the dashing young fellow who had demanded the number, and who had declared he would see this thing through if he sat there all night, had taken an opportunity to slip away.

Meanwhile the Pekinese party were passing through every stage of resistance to abject surrender. "I 'll go on the top," said the sealskin lady at last. "You mustn't." "I will." "You'll have pneumonia." "Let me take it." (This from the man.) "Certainly not"—she would die with her dog. When she had disappeared up the stairs, the conductor came back, pulled the bell, and the bus went on. He stood sourly triumphant while his conduct was savagely discussed in his face by the remnant of the party.

Then the engine struck work, and the conductor went to the help of the driver. It was a long job, and presently the lady with the dog stole down the stairs and re-entered the bus. When the engine was put right the conductor came back and pulled the bell. Then his eye fell on the dog, and his hand went to the bell-rope again. The driver looked round, the conductor pointed to the dog, the bus stopped, and the struggle recommenced with all the original features, the conductor walking the pavement, the driver smacking his arms on the box, the little dog blinking at the lights, the sealskin lady declaring that she would *not* go on the top—and finally going.

"I've got my rules," said the conductor to me when I was the last passenger left behind. He had won his victory, but felt that he would like to justify himself to somebody.

"Rules," I said, "are necessary things, but there are rules and rules. Some are hard and fast rules, like the rule of the road, which cannot be broken without danger to life and limb. But some are only rules for your guidance, which you can apply or wink at, as common sense dictates—like that rule about the dogs. They are not a whip put in your hand to scourge your passengers with, but an authority for an emergency. They are meant to be observed in the spirit, not in the letter—for the comfort and not the discomfort of the passengers. You have kept the rule and broken its spirit. You want to mix your rules with a little good will and good temper."

He took it very well, and when I got off the bus he said "Good night" quite amiably.

ON VIRTUES THAT DONT COUNT

I OFTEN think that when we go down into the Valley of Jehoshaphat we shall all be greatly astonished at the credit and debit items we shall find against our names in the ledger of our life. We shall discover that many of the virtues which we thought would give us a thumping credit balance have not been recorded at all, and that some of our failings have by the magic of celestial book-keeping been entered on the credit side. The fact is that our virtues are often no virtues at all. They may even only be vices, seen in reverse.

Take Smithson Spinks — everyone knows the Smithson Spinks type. What a reputation for

generosity the fellow has! What a grandeur of giving he exhales! How noble his scorn for mean fellows! How royal the flash of his hand to his pocket if you are getting up a testimonial to this man, or a fund for that object, or want a loan yourself! No one hesitates to ask Smithson Spinks for anything. He likes to be asked. He would be hurt if he were not asked. And yet if you track Smithson Spinks's generosity to its source you find that it is only pride turned inside out. The true motive of his giving is not love of his fellows, but love of himself and the vanity of a mind that wants the admiration and envy of others. You see the reverse of the shield at home, where the real Smithson Spinks is discovered as a stingy fellow, who grumbles when the boys want new boots and who leaves his wife to struggle perpetually with a load of debt and an empty purse, while he plays the part of the large-hearted gentleman abroad. He believes in his own fiction, but when he looks in the ledger he will have a painful shock. He will turn to the credit side, expecting to find *GENEROSITY* written in large and golden letters, and he will probably find instead *VANITY* in plain black on the debit side.

And I—let us say that I flatter myself on being a truthful person. But am I? What will the ledger say? I have a dreadful suspicion that it may put my truthfulness down to the compulsion of a tremulous nerve. I may—who knows?—only be truthful because I haven't courage enough for dissimulation. It may not be a positive moral virtue at all, but only the moral reflection of a timorous spirit. It needs

great courage to tell a lie which you have got to face out. I could no more do it than I could dance on the point of a needle.

Consider the courage of that monumental liar Arthur Orton—the sheer unflinching audacity with which he challenged the truth, facing Tichborne's own mother with his impudent tale of being her son, facing judges and juries, going into witness-boxes with his web of outrageous inventions, keeping a stiff lip before the devastating rain of exposure. A ruffian, of course, a thick-skinned ruffian, but what courage!

Now there may be a potential Arthur Orton in me, but he has never had a chance. I have no gift of dissimulation. If I tried it I should flounder like a boy on his first pair of skates. I could not bluff a rabbit. No one would believe me if I told him a lie. My eye would return a verdict of guilty against me on the spot, and my tongue would refuse its office. And therein is the worm that eats at my self-respect. May not my obedience to the Ten Commandments be only due to my fear of the eleventh commandment—that cynical rescript which runs, "Thou shalt not be found out"? I hope it is not so, but I must prepare myself for the revelations of the ledger in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. For they will be as candid about me and you as about Smithson Spinks.

You can never be absolutely sure of a man's moral nature until you have shipped him, figuratively,

**. . . somewhere east of Suez
Where the best is like the worst,
Where there ain't no Ten Commandments,
And a man can raise a thirst—**

until in fact you have got him away from his defences, liberated him from the conventions and respectabilities that encompass him with minatory fingers and vigilant eyes, and left him to the uncontrolled governance of himself. Then it will be found whether the virtues are diamonds or paste—whether they spring out of the Ten Commandments or out of the eleventh. The lord Angelo in *Measure for Measure* passed for a strict and saintly person—and I have no doubt believed himself to be a strict and saintly person—so long as he was under control, but when the Duke's back was turned the libertine appeared. And note that subtle touch of Shakespeare's. Angelo was not an ordinary libertine. He passed for a saint because he could not be tempted by vice, but only by virtue. Hear him communing with himself when Isabella has gone:

... What is 't I dream on?
 O cunning enemy, that, to catch a saint.
 With saints dost bait thy hook! Most dangerous
 Is that temptation that doth goad us on
 To sin in loving virtue; never could the strumpet.
 With all her double vigour, art, and nature,
 Once stir my temper; but this virtuous maid
 Subdues me quite.

His saintliness revolted from vice, but his love of virtue opened the floodgates of viciousness. What a paradox is man! I think I have known more than one lord Angelo whose virtue rested on nothing better than a fastidious taste, or an absence of appetite.

That is certainly the case with many people who have the quality of sobriety. Abraham Lincoln, himself a total abstainer, once got into great trouble

for saying so. He was addressing a temperance meeting at a Presbyterian church, and said: "In my judgment such of us as have never fallen victims (to drink) have been spared more from the absence of appetite than from mental or moral superiority over those who have fallen." It seemed a reasonable thing to say, but it shocked the stern teetotalers present. "It's a shame," said one, "that he should be permitted to abuse us so in the house of the Lord." They did not like to feel that they were not more virtuous than men who drank and even got drunk. They expected to have a large credit entry for not tippling. Like Malvolio, they mixed up virtue with "cakes and ale." If you indulged in them you were vicious, and if you abstained from them you were virtuous. It was a beautifully simple moral code, but virtue is not so easily catalogued. It is not a negative thing, but a positive thing. It is not measured by its antipathies but by its sympathies. Its manifestations are many, but its root is one, and its names are "truth and justice" which even the Prayer Book puts before "religion and piety."

And to return to the Lincoln formula, if you have no taste for tippling what virtue is there in not tippling? The virtue is often with the tippler. I knew a man who died of drink, and whose life nevertheless had been an heroic struggle with his enemy. He was always falling, but he never ceased fighting. And it is the fighting, I think, he will find recorded in the ledger—greatly to his surprise, for he had the most modest opinion of his merits and a deep sense of his moral infirmity.

It is no more virtuous for some men not to get drunk than it is for a Rothschild not to put his hand in his neighbour's pocket in order to steal half a crown. He doesn't need a half-crown, and there is no virtue in not stealing what you don't want. That was what was wrong with the "Northern Farmer's" philosophy that those who had money were the best:

'Tis'n them as 'as munny as breaks into 'ouses an' steals,
 Them as 'as coats to their backs an' taakes their regular meals.
 Noa, but it's them as niver knows wheer a meal's to be 'ad—
 Taake my word for it, Sammy, the poor in a loomp is bad.

It was a creed of virtue which looked at the fact and not at the temptation. He will have found a much more complex system of book-keeping where he has gone. I imagine him standing painfully puzzled at the sort of accounts which he will find made up in the "valley of decision."

ON POSSESSION

I MET a lady the other day who had travelled much and seen much, and who talked with great vivacity about her experiences. But I noticed one peculiarity about-her. If I happened to say that I too had been, let us say, to Tangier, her interest in Tangier immediately faded away and she switched the conversation on to, let us say, Cairo, where I had not been, and where therefore she was quite happy. And her enthusiasm about the Honourable Ulick de Tompkins vanished when she found that I had had the honour of meeting that eminent personage. And so with

books and curiosities, places and things—she was only interested in them so long as they were her exclusive property. She had the itch of possession, and when she ceased to possess she ceased to enjoy. If she could not have Tangier all to herself she did not want it at all.

And the chief trouble in this perplexing world is that there are so many people afflicted like her with the mania of owning things that really do not need to be owned in order to be enjoyed. Their experiences must be exclusive or they have no pleasure in them. I have heard of a man who countermanded an order for an etching when he found that someone else in the same town had bought a copy. It was not the beauty of the etching that appealed to him: it was the petty and childish notion that he was getting something that no one else had got, and when he found that someone else had got it its value ceased to exist.

The truth, of course, is that such a man could never possess anything in the only sense that matters. For possession is a spiritual and not a material thing. I do not own—to take an example—that wonderful picture by Ghirlandajo of the bottle-nosed old man looking at his grandchild. I have not even a good print of it. But if it hung in my own room I could not have more pleasure out of it than I have experienced for years. It is among the imponderable treasures stored away in the galleries of the mind with memorable sunsets I have seen and noble books I have read, and beautiful actions or faces that I remember. I can enjoy it whenever I like and recall all the tenderness and humanity that the painter saw

in the face of that plain old Italian gentleman with the bottle nose as he stood gazing down at the face of his grandson long centuries ago. The pleasure is not diminished by the fact that all may share this spiritual ownership, any more than my pleasure in the sunshine, or the shade of a fine beech, or the smell of a hedge of sweetbrier, or the song of the lark in the meadow is diminished by the thought that it is common to all.

From my window I look on the slope of a fine hill crowned with beech woods. On the other side of the hill there are sylvan hollows of solitude which cannot have changed their appearance since the ancient Britons hunted in these woods two thousand years ago. In the legal sense a certain noble lord is the owner. He lives far off and I doubt whether he has seen these woods once in ten years. But I and the children of the little hamlet know every glade and hollow of these hills and have them for a perpetual playground. We do not own a square foot of them, but we could not have a richer enjoyment of them if we owned every leaf on every tree. For the pleasure of things is not in their possession but in their use.

It was the exclusive spirit of my lady friend that Juvenal satirized long ago in those lines in which he poured ridicule on the people who scurried through the Alps, not in order to enjoy them, but in order to say that they had done something that other people had not done. Even so great a man as Wordsworth was not free from this disease of exclusive possession. De Quincey tells that, standing with him one day looking at the mountains, he (De Quincey) expressed

his admiration of the scene, whereupon Wordsworth turned his back on him. He would not permit any one else to praise *his* mountains. He was the high priest of nature, and had something of the priestly arrogance. He was the medium of revelation, and any one who worshipped the mountains in his presence, except through him, was guilty of an impertinence both to him and to nature.

In the ideal world of Plato there was no such thing as exclusive possession. Even wives and children were to be held in common, and Bernard Shaw to-day regards the exclusiveness of the home as the enemy of the free human spirit. I cannot attain to these giddy heights of communism. On this point I am with Aristotle. He assailed Plato's doctrine and pointed out that the State is not a mere individual, but a body composed of dissimilar parts whose unity is to be drawn "*ex dissimilium hominum consensu.*" I am as sensitive as any one about my title to my personal possessions. I dislike having my umbrella stolen or my pocket picked, and if I found a burglar on my premises I am sure I shouldn't be able to imitate the romantic example of the good bishop in *Les Misérables*. When I found the other day that some young fruit trees I had left in my orchard for planting had been removed in the night I was sensible of a very commonplace anger. If I had known who my Jean Valjean was I shouldn't have asked him to come and take some more trees. I should have invited him to return what he had removed or submit to consequences that follow in such circumstances.

I cannot conceive a society in which private

property will not be a necessary condition of life. I may be wrong. The war has poured human society into the melting pot, and he would be a daring person who ventured to forecast the shape in which it will emerge a generation or two hence. Ideas are in the saddle, and tendencies beyond our control and the range of our speculation are at work shaping our future. If mankind finds that it can live more conveniently and more happily without private property it will do so. In spite of the Decalogue private property is only a human arrangement, and no reasonable observer of the operation of the arrangement will pretend that it executes justice unfailingly in the affairs of men. But because the idea of private property has been permitted to override with its selfishness the common good of humanity, it does not follow that there are not limits within which that idea can function for the general convenience and advantage. The remedy is not in abolishing it altogether, but in subordinating it to the idea of equal justice and community of purpose. It will, reasonably understood, deny me the right to call the coal measures, which were laid with the foundations of the earth, my private property or to lay waste a countryside for deer forests, but it will still leave me a legitimate and sufficient sphere of ownership. And the more true the equation of private and public rights is, the more secure shall I be in those possessions which the common sense and common interest of men ratify as reasonable and desirable. It is the grotesque and iniquitous wrongs associated with a predatory conception of private property which to

some minds make the idea of private property itself inconsistent with a just and tolerable social system. When the idea of private property is restricted to limits which command the sanction of the general thought and experience of society, it will be in no danger of attack. I shall be able to leave my fruit trees out in the orchard without any apprehensions as to their safety.

But while I neither desire nor expect to see the abolition of private ownership, I see nothing but evil in the hunger to possess exclusively things, the common use of which does not diminish the fund of enjoyment. I do not care how many people see Tangier: my personal memory of the experience will remain in its integrity. The itch to own things for the mere pride of possession is the disease of petty, vulgar minds. "I do not know how it is," said a very rich man in my hearing, "but when I am in London I want to be in the country and when I am in the country I want to be in London." He was not wanting to escape from London or the country, but from himself. He had sold himself to his great possessions and was bankrupt. In the words of a great preacher "his hands were full but his soul was empty, and an empty soul makes an empty world." There was wisdom as well as wit in that saying of the YOLOFFS that "he who was born first has the greatest number of old clothes." It is not a bad rule for the pilgrimage of this world to travel light and leave the luggage to those who take a pride in its abundance.

ON SHOP WINDOWS

IT is one of the consolations of being unemployed that one has time to look in the shop windows. When I was among the employed I never looked in shop windows. I was shot like a shuttle in a loom from home to office and from engagement to engagement, and had no time to saunter along and "stand and stare." It was not merely that I had no time for shop windows: I thought I had no taste for shop windows. If I walked down Regent Street with Jane I was sensible of a certain impatience when she made a sudden left-wheel and stood transfixed before some brilliant idea of the window-dresser. I declined to wheel to the left. I stood implacably in the middle of the pavement, looking severely ahead or around or above. I wanted to be getting on with the war. I was a serious person, with a soul above the frivolities of shop windows. No doubt there was something of a pose in this behaviour. There is usually something of a pose in us when we feel superior.

But with the inheritance of leisure I have become more humble-minded. I not only wheel to the left when Jane wheels, but I wheel to the left on my own account. I am becoming a student of shop windows. I find them as interesting as a hedgerow in the country. I can tell you the price of things. I can discuss with you the relative merits of Marshall and Snelgrove and Peter Robinson, and the name of Mr. Self ridge falls trippingly from my tongue. There is not a tailor's shop between the Law Courts and Marble Arch that I have not peered into, and if you

want to know where a good line in boots is to be had or where motor cars are cheap to-day or precious stones should be sought I am worth consulting. No longer does Jane regard a walk down Regent Street with me as an affliction. I am a companion after her own heart—if not an expert, at least an intelligent amateur. A touch on my arm, and I wheel to the left with military precision and line up in front of the window and discuss the contents in no unenlightened spirit. My opinion is regarded. I am asked questions. I am listened to with respect. My taste in hats is becoming a proverb, and it is allowed that I have a good eye for colour.

In this new-found diversion I am catholic in my tastes. You may see me lost in thought before a furniture shop or a fruit shop, or examining trombones or Kodaks, or looking at old colour prints or old books, or studying old china, or simply standing amused among a crowd of other idlers watching the kittens at play in the naturalist's shop window. There is no covetousness in all this. I am conscious of no yearnings for unattainable things. On the contrary, I am astonished at the number of things I can do without.

Nor am I tempted to go inside the shops.

May Day seldom looks
Up in the country as it does in books.

And I know that shop windows are no more like the inside of shops than a company prospectus is like the company's balance-sheet. You see, let us say, a pair of shoes in the window at twenty-five shillings.

It would be a crime to let that pair of shoes go, you say. It is what you have been looking for—something "good-cheap," as the old English phrase went. You go inside and allude falteringly to that cheap line in the window. The salesman observes the falter. He speaks coldly of that attractive-looking bait. You feebly insist, and he tries it on, making you sensible the while that a person like you would be dishonoured by such footwear, that he is surprised you should think that a person of your obvious quality can appear abroad in such inferior leathers. Moreover, aren't they a leetle tight across the instep? And unfortunately he hasn't the next size in stock. . . . Now here is a perfect shoe, best box-calf, soft as kid, durable as brass, last a lifetime. . . . The price? The fellow looks inside as though the question of price had not occurred to him, as though it had no relation to the subject. . . . Fifty-five shillings. And as you leave the shop worsted, wearing the shoes, you fancy you hear a slight chuckle of derision from the victor.

There are, of course, people who love shopping and whose life is irradiated by victories at the counter. They are chiefly women, but I have known men who had gifts in this line of no mean order. They could march into a shop as boldly as any woman and have the place turned upside down and go away without spending a copper, carrying their heads as high and haughtily as you please. But men of this heroic mould are rare. Men are usually much too mean-spirited, too humble, too timid to be fit to go into a shop to buy anything. Perhaps I ought to say they

are too proud. They would slink out, if they could do so unobserved. They would decline to buy what they don't want to buy if their vanity would permit them. But they cannot face the ordeal. They cannot leave the impression that they are not rolling in riches and are not able to buy anything in the shop, whether they want it or not. And it is only fair to us to say that sometimes we fall from compassion. We buy because the lady has been so attentive—or has such an agreeable presence—that we have not the courage to disappoint her or, less creditably, to lose her favourable opinion.

Now women, of course, are afflicted with none of these handicaps. The trouble with men as shoppers is that they are incurable amateurs and sentimentalists. They not only do not know the ropes; they do not know that there are any ropes to know. They are just babes and sucklings at the business. You can see the Delilah behind the counter smiling pityingly and even contemptuously to herself as they approach with their mouths wide open to receive the hook. She chooses her bait under the poor simpletons' noses, and lands them without a struggle. She knows that they will take any old thing at any old price. But a woman marches to the attack as the soldier marches to battle. She is for the rigour of the game. The shop is her battlefield, and she surveys it with the eye of the professional warrior. And Delilah prepares to receive her as an enemy worthy of her steel. All her faculties are aroused, all her suspicions are awakened. She expects no quarter, and she will give none.

Here is Pamela, for example, accompanied by Roderick, halting rather shamefacedly in the rear. Roderick has never seen Pamela on the warpath before, and it is a terrifying revelation. He had thought she was so kind-hearted and genial that everybody must love her, but he grows crimson as he sees the progress of the duel. This is not the Pamela he knew: this is a very Amazon of a woman, armed to the teeth, clothed in an icy disapproval of everything, riding down her foe with Prussian frightfulness. And all over a matter of a handbag. The counter is piled with handbags, and Pamela examines each with relentless thoroughness and increasing dissatisfaction. She must have more handbags. And Delilah with darkening brows ransacks the store for the last handbag. She understands the game, but she is helpless, and when at the end of the battle Pamela coldly remarks that they are not what she wants, and that she will just take one of those tops, Delilah knows that she has been defeated. "I only wanted a top, you see," says Pamela to Roderick sweetly as they leave the shop, "but I wanted to see how the bags were fitted to them."

Or to understand the gulf that separates men and women in the art and science of shopping, see my Lady Bareacres at the mantlemaker's, accompanied by a lady companion. All the riches of the establishment are displayed before her, and she parades in front of the mirror in an endless succession of flowing robes. She gives the impression of inexhaustible good intentions, but she finds that there is nothing that suits her, and she goes away to repeat the

performance elsewhere. And as she goes Delilah looks daggers at the companion who has come with her ladyship to get hints for the garment that she is to make for her.

The man has not been born who could play so high a hand as that. Whether his inferiority in the great art of shopping is to be accounted to him as a virtue or a shame may be left to the moralists to discuss; but the fact is indisputable enough. He knows his weakness, and rarely goes into a shop except in the last extremity or under the competent guardianship of a woman. He can look in shop windows if he have firmness of mind and can say, "Danton, no weakness!" with the assurance that Danton will not bolt inside. But there is one sort of shop window before which the least of us are safe. And it transcends all shop windows in interest. It is the window through which you look into the far places of the earth, Canada and Queensland, British Columbia and New Zealand. The Strand is lit up with glimpses of those distant horizons—landscapes waving with corn, landscapes flowing with milk and honey, bales of fleecy wool, sugar-canes like scaffold poles, peaches that make the mouth water, pumpkins as large as the full moon, prodigious trout that would make the angler's heart sing, snow mountains and climbing-boots, a thousand invitations to come out into the wide spaces of the earth, where plenty and freedom and the sunshine await you. I dare say it is an illusion. I dare say the wide spaces of the earth are very unlike these wonderful windows. But I love to look in them and to feel that they are true.

They almost make me wish that I were young again
—young enough to set out

For to admire and for to see,
For to behold the world so wide.

A TALE OF FLEET STREET

No doubt there were greater things in Sir James Barrie's speech to the undergraduates at St. Andrews than the story of his conquest of Fleet Street; but for me, as for many others, there was nothing so interesting. It touched old chords of memory. There are many who have shared Sir James's youthful struggles without sharing his dazzling triumphs. My own thoughts went back to more than forty years ago, about the time when Barrie came to London to try his luck in the enchanted street. I recalled two brothers—I knew them well—living in a country town, whose eyes were fixed on the starry realm of Fleet Street from afar. What a remote, impossible, golden world it seemed! Once they had known a fellow who had gone into it. He had been as one of themselves, familiar, companionable, ordinary; but one incredible day he had flown away to Fleet Street as naturally as a bird flies home to its nest, and they remained behind to imagine the sea of glory into which he had passed.

Then one day something happened. The younger of the two boys, Jonathan, noticed that the family copy of the *Standard* (that fine old paper that perished so lamentably of Tariff Reform) had been cut. An

article, a column in length, had disappeared from the leader page. His curiosity was awakened. There was only one person in the household who was likely to have done this thing, and that was his brother, Geoffrey. But to ask Geoffrey about it was impossible. He was a reticent person, who did not throw his confidences about, least of all among younger brothers. But Jonathan knew that he had been writing in the privacy of his bedroom late at night, and suspected that something had come of it. So he went out and purchased another copy of the *Standard*, turned to the column that had been missing, and there saw an article:

ON A COUNTRY CORN EXCHANGE

From a Correspondent

Ah! so he had done it, thought Jonathan. He had got his foot in the famous street with the golden pavements. That night he observed Geoffrey with a new feeling of importance, and saw him retire early to his bedroom with the delightful sense of sharing his great secret without his knowledge.

After that he waited for the *Standard* as eagerly as Geoffrey. He came to know the symptoms of an approaching event, and when he saw his brother cling to the *Standard* at breakfast and disappear with it into the garden, he knew that it was not the cricket news only—important as that was to both of them in those days—that made the paper so absorbing, and that when it fell to him there would be a gap in its contents. Then he noticed that other papers began to have occasional gaps, and life

A TALE OF FLEET STREET

became a thrilling pursuit of Geoffrey's adventures in Fleet Street.

But the pursuit was not enough. It whetted his appetite for adventures of his own, and he too began to retire to his bedroom early and write long and late, until the door opened and a gentle voice would say, "Child, you ought to be in bed." I fancy it was poor stuff that Jonathan wrote, and Fleet Street showed a cold indifference to it. There was one article on *A Harvest Home* that grew worn and crumpled by many transits through the post. But the struggle was not in vain. One unforgettable day he opened an evening paper, and there—Lo! Behold! . . . And next morning the postman brought a letter from the editor of the paper, stating—could he believe his eyes?—that he would be glad to receive further articles of the same character from his contributor. The sun shone with extraordinary splendour that day, and the birds sang more joyously than they had, ever sung before. Jonathan walked on air—with the astonishing letter in his pocket—and he felt that Nature was rejoicing with him.

It is an old tale of far-off, forgotten things, called to mind by the recollections of Sir James Barrie. Perhaps it is worth telling, for the encouragement of other youths whose eager eyes are turned, wisely or unwisely, towards Fleet Street. I have lost sight of one of the brothers for many years; but he came to some prominence, edited a famous paper, and told me that when he went into the office he found, seated at a humble desk, the youth whose wonderful translation to Fleet Street had once filled him with

envy and longing. The other brother still writes. I fancy I recognize his hand sometimes in articles that still have the note of that much-travelled manuscript of the *Harvest Home*.

ON THE TOP NOTE

A PLEASANT-LOOKING young lady (whose name I think was Pamela) sitting opposite me in the bus was complaining to her companion that Reginald was so dead-alive. You couldn't get him excited about anything. He was most *frightfully* clever, of course—a B.Sc. and all that sort of thing, don't you know; but, oh, so *awfully* icy. You went to a theatre with him, and you got most *tremendously* thrilled, and he would say, "Yes, quite nice." Or you got him to read a book that was simply ripping and that you had *wallowed* in most terrifically, and he would say, "Quite nice." She liked people to be enthusiastic. It was most horribly disappointing when you were *simply boiling* with excitement to hear someone say, "Yes, quite nice." It made you feel *most awfully* done in, don't you know. If people enjoyed themselves, why shouldn't they say they enjoyed themselves and let themselves "go" a bit? She always let herself go.

I felt that I agreed with her on the main issue. Reginald was aggravating. I felt that I knew Reginald. I saw him going through life more than a little bored with everything. There's nothing new and nothing true, and no matter, he seems to say.

Man delights him not, nor woman neither. He is astonished at nothing, amused by nothing, cheered by nothing. His mind has disciplined his emotions so effectually that they have ceased to have anything to do. He is superior to tears or laughter, and would refuse to be surprised even if he saw the lions by the Nelson Column suddenly stand up and roar for their dinner. As a moderately enthusiastic person, I sympathized with the young lady opposite about Reginald. I wished Reginald would let himself go a bit.

But then it seemed to me that a mist passed before my vision and that Reginald himself was sitting in the seat opposite talking to a friend about Pamela. He liked Pamela very much, he said, but really her gush got on his nerves. She was always on her top note. Everything was most frightfully good or most awfully jolly or most hideously bad. Why couldn't people express themselves reasonably and use words with some respect for their meaning? He wished someone would tell Pam not to shriek every time she opened her mouth. It was such a pity, because she really had a pretty mouth and was a nice girl.

And hearing (imaginatively) Reginald's view of the matter, I was bound to admit that he had a case too. For I share his dislike of these extravagances of speech with which our Pamelas express the warmth of their feelings and the poverty of their minds. I should like to remind Pamela of the caution which Johnson gave to Boswell. He had accompanied Bozzy to Harwich to see him embark for Utrecht. "I happened to say," says Boswell, "it would be terrible if he should

not find a speedy opportunity of returning to London, and be confined in so dull a place.

"Johnson: 'Don't, sir, accustom yourself to use big words for little matters. It would *not* be *terrible*, though I *were* to be detained some time here.' "

It may have occurred to Boswell that Johnson was hardly the person to rebuke the use of big words; but though Johnson loved long words he did not use wrong words. His sin was not the hysteria of speech, but the pedantry of speech. He liked the fine clothes of language and dressed his thoughts up in full-bottomed wig and ruffles. It was a curious weakness for so great a man whose natural expression was always simple and vigorous. His big words were an afterthought of the pedant imposed on the brief, energetic utterance that was natural to him, as when commenting on some work he said that it "had not wit enough to keep it sweet" and then, pulling himself together, blunted the edge of that swift, keen criticism by saying that "it had not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction." But though Johnson's big words blurred his thought, they did not misrepresent it. They deprived it of force, but not of precision. His rebuke to Boswell was in regard to the extravagance of the word for the occasion. It would have been annoying or inconvenient to be kept at Harwich, but it would not have been terrible.

But the modern habit is not a mere matter of excess, as in the case of Boswell. In the attempt to be emphatic, Pamela murders speech. If you pass her the mustard, she says "Thanks, awfully." If she has enjoyed her game of tennis, she says it has been

"awfully jolly/" and if she approves of a book, she declares it to be "frightfully good." I am old enough to remember when this verbal atrocity began to be used, and I have lived to see it become the accepted coinage of a certain kind of conversation. It began as a piece of affectation, and has ended as a desolating vulgarity.

I do not think that Reginald wants Pamela to be less enthusiastic. He only wants her to preserve some proportion in regard to things. He feels as Jamie Soutar, of Drumtochty, in Ian Maclaren's story, felt. Jamie had "a gift o' discreemination," and was distressed by the purple adjectives of Mr. Hopps, the little Cockney. When Mr. Hopps raved about the sunset, Jamie observed that it was "no bad."

"No bad!" said Mr. Hopps. "I call it glorious, and if it hisn't, then I 'd like to know what his."

"Man," replied Soutar austerely, "ye '11 surely keep ae word for the 21st o' Reevelation."

Had any native used such words as "magnificent" in Drumtochty there would have been an uneasy feeling in the glen; the man must be suffering from wind in the head, and might upset the rotation of crops, sowing his young grass after potatoes, or replacing turnip with beet.

Reginald would not expect Pamela to put so harsh a bridle as this upon her tongue. He would only suggest that she should be sparing of her superlatives and her enthusiasm, so that when she used them they conveyed some sort of meaning and some sense of value. And probably Pamela would find that in curing herself she had cured Reginald. He would

let himself "go" a little more if she let herself "go" a little less. For his iciness is probably an attempt to moderate her tropical fervour.

ON FEAR

I AM disposed to agree with Captain Dolbey that the man who knows no fear exists only in the imagination of the lady novelist or those who fight their battles at the base. He is invented because these nai'Ve people suppose that a hero who is conscious of fear ceases to be a hero. But the truth surely is that there would be no merit in being brave if you had no fear. The real victory of the hero is not over outward circumstance, but over himself. One of the bravest men of our time is a man who was born timid and nervous and suffered tortures of apprehension, and who set himself to the deliberate conquest of his fears by challenging every danger that crossed his path and even going out of his way to meet the things he dreaded. By sheer will he beat down the enemy within, and to the external world he seemed like a man who knew no fear. But the very essence of his heroism was that he had fought fear and won.

It is time we got rid of the notion that there is anything discreditable in knowing fear. You might as well say that there is something discreditable in being tempted to tell a falsehood. The virtue is not in having no temptation to lie, but in being tempted to lie and yet telling the truth. And the more you are tempted the more splendid is the resistance. Without temptation you may make a

plaster saint, but not a human hero. That is why the familiar story of Nelson when a boy—"Fear! grandmother. I never saw fear. What is it?"—is so essentially false. Nelson did some of the bravest things ever done by man. They were brave to the brink of recklessness. The whole episode of the battle of Copenhagen was a breathless challenge to all the dictates of prudence. On the facts one would be compelled to admit that it was an act of uncalculating recklessness, except for one incident which flashes a sudden light on the mind of Nelson and reveals his astonishing command of himself and of circumstance. When the issue was trembling in the balance and every moment lost might mean disaster, he prepared his audacious message of terms to the Crown Prince ashore. It was a magnificent piece of what, in these days, we should call camouflage. When he had written it, a wafer was given him, but he ordered a candle to be brought from the cockpit and sealed the letter with wax, affixing a larger seal than he ordinarily used. "This," said he, "is no time to appear hurried and informal." With such triumphant self-possession could he trample on fear when he had a great end in view. But when there was nothing at stake he could be as fearful as anybody, as in the accident to his carriage, recorded, I think, in Southey's *Life of Nelson*.

That incident of young Swinburne's climb of Culver Cliff, in the Isle of Wight, expresses the common-sense of the matter very well. At the age of seventeen he wanted to be a cavalry officer, and he decided to climb Culver Cliff, which was believed to

be impregnable, "as a chance of testing my nerve in the face of death which could not be surpassed." He performed the feat, and then confessed his hardihood to his mother.

"Of course," he said, "she wanted to know why I had done such a thing, and when I told her she laughed a short, sweet laugh, most satisfactory to the young ear, and said, 'Nobody ever thought you were a coward, my boy.' I said that was all very well, but how could I tell till I tried? 'But you won't do it again?' she said. I replied, 'Of course not—where would be the fun?'"

It was not that he had no fear: it was that he wanted to convince himself that he was able to master his fear when the emergency came. Having discovered that he had fear under his control there was no sense in taking risks for the mere sake of taking them.

Most fears are purely subjective, the phantoms of a too vivid mind. I was looking over a deserted house situated in large grounds in the country the other day. It had been empty since the beginning of the war. Up to then it had been occupied by a man in the shipping trade. On the day that war was declared he rushed into the house and cried, "We have declared war on Germany, I am ruined." Then he went out and shot himself. Had his mind been disciplined against panic he would have mastered his fears, and would have discovered that he had the luck to be in a trade which has benefited by the war more, perhaps, than any other.

In this case it was the sudden impact of fear that

overthrew reason from its balance, but in other cases fear is a maggot in the brain that grows by brooding. There is a story of Maupassant's, which illustrates how a man who is not a coward may literally die of fright, by dwelling upon fear. He had resented the conduct of a man in a restaurant, who had stared insolently at a lady who was with him. His action led to a challenge from the offender, and an arrangement to meet next morning. When he got home, instead of going to bed, he began to wonder who his foe was, to hunt for his name in directories, to recall the cold assurance of his challenge, and to invest him with all sorts of terrors as a marksman. As the night advanced he passed through all the stages from anxious curiosity to panic, and when his valet called him at dawn he found a corpse. Like the shipowner, he had shot himself to escape the terrors of his mind.

It is the imaginative people who suffer most from fear. Give them only a hint of peril, and their minds will explore the whole circumference of disastrous consequences. It is not a bad thing in this world to be born a little dull and unimaginative. You will have a much more comfortable time. And if you have not taken that precaution, you will do well to have a prosaic person handy to correct your fantasies. Therein Don Quixote showed his wisdom. In the romantic theatre of his mind perils rose like giants on every horizon; but there was always Sancho Panza on his donkey, ready to prick the bubbles of his master with the broadsword of his incomparable stupidity.

IF JEREMY CAME BACK

IT is the agreeable illusion of the theatre that life is a rounded tale. We pay our money at the box, go in, see the story begin, progress, and end, sadly or cheerfully, and come away with the discords resolved, virtue exalted and villainy abased, and the tangled skein of things neatly unravelled. And so home, content. But on the stage of life there is none of this satisfying completeness and finish. We enter in the midst of a very ancient drama, spend our years in trying to pick up the threads and purport of the action, and go as inopportunately as we came. The curtain does not descend punctually upon an exhausted plot and an accomplished purpose. It descends upon a thrilling but unfinished tale. You have got, perhaps, into the most breathless part of the action, seized at last the clue that will assuredly explain the mystery, when suddenly and irrationally the light fails, and for you the theatre is dark for ever. Your emotions have been stirred, your curiosity awakened, your sympathies aroused in vain. Even the episode you have been permitted to witness is left with ragged ends and unfinished judgments. How did it proceed and how did it end, and what was the sequel? Was virtue or villainy triumphant? Who was the real hero? Were your sympathies on the right side or the wrong? And, more personally, what of those shoots of life you have thrown out to the challenge of the future? Did they wilt or flourish, and what was their fortune? These are among the thousand questions to which

we should like an answer, and there is nothing unreasonable in thinking that we may have an answer.

It would be enough to satisfy the curiosity of most of us to have the privilege which Jeremy Bentham confessed that he would like to enjoy. That amiable and industrious philosopher, having spent a blameless life in the development of his comfortable gospel of the "greatest good of the greatest number," entertained the pleasant fancy of returning to the scene of his labours once in every hundred years to see humanity marching triumphantly to the heavenly city of Utilitarianism, along the straight and smooth turnpike road that he had fashioned for its ease and direction. He had the touching confidence of the idealist that humanity only had to be shown the way out of the wilderness to plunge into it with joyous shouts, and hurry along it with eager enthusiasm. And since he had shown the way all would henceforth be well. It is this confidence which makes the idealist an object of pity to the cynic. For the cynic is often only the idealist turned sour. He is the idealist disillusioned by loss of faith, not in his ideals, but in humanity.

TKis is about the time when Jeremy might be expected back on his first centennial visit to see how we have got along the road to human perfectibility. I can imagine him, poised in the unapparent, looking with round-eyed astonishment upon the answer which a century of time has given to his anticipations. This, the New Jerusalem of his confident vision? This shambles the harvest of a hundred years of

progress? And the cynic beside him, tapping his ghostly snuff-box, observes dryly: "They don't seem to have got very far on the way, friend Jeremy; not very far on the way." I can conceive the philosopher returning sadly to the Elysian fields, wondering whether, after all, these visits are worth while. • If this is the achievement of a hundred years' enjoyment of the philosophy of Utilitarianism, what unthinkable revelation may await him on his next visit. Perhaps . . . yes, perhaps, it will be better to stay away.

But all the answers of time will not be so disquieting. It is probable, for example, that Benjamin Franklin will enjoy his visit immensely. He will find much to delight his curious and adventurous mind. I see him watching the flying machines as joyously as a child and as fondly as a parent. For among his multitudinous activities he experimented with balloons and suffered the gibes of the foolish. Why, asked his critic, did he waste his time over these childish things? What, in the name of heaven, was the use of balloons? And Benjamin made the immortal reply, "What is the use of a new-born baby?" If he is among the presences who watch the events of to-day he will be almost as astonished as his critics to see the dimensions his "new-born baby" has grown to. He will be astonished at other things. He will recall the day when, in his fine flowered-silk garment, he entered, as the delegate of the insurgent farmers of New England, the reception of the great—was it not in Downing Street?—and was spat upon by the noble lords, to whose dim vision the future of the new-born baby across the

Atlantic was undecipherable. He will recall how he put his outraged garment away, never to wear it again until he had signed the Declaration of Independence. And now, what miracle is this? England and America reconciled at last. England, no less than France, straining her eyes across the Atlantic for the relief that is hastening to her help in the extremest peril of her history from the giant by whose unquiet cradle he played his part a century and a half ago. . . . Well, no one will rejoice more at the reconciliation or watch the tide of relief streaming across the ocean with more good will than Benjamin, who deplored the breach with England as much as anybody. But the noble lords who spat on him . . .

And I can see Napoleon, with his unpleasant familiarity, pinching the spiritual ears of the French scientists of his day and saying, "How now, gentlemen? What do you say to the steamboat now?" Poor wretches, how humiliated they will be! For when Napoleon asked the Academie des Sciences to report as to the possibilities of the newly invented steamboat, their verdict was, "Idée folle, erreur grossiere, absurdity." They saw in it only a foolish toy, and not a new-born baby destined to be the giant who is performing such prodigies on the seas of the world to-day.

But it is not the scientists who will need to hang their heads before the revelations that await them. They will look on with the complacency of those who see the mighty harvest of their sowing. Perhaps among the presences who surround them they may descry a bulky man, with rolling gait, whom they

ALPHA OF THE PLOUGH

knew in their day on earth as the intellectual autocrat of his generation and who levelled the shafts of his wit at their foolish experiments. They will have lost the very human frailty of retaliation if they do not remind him of some of those shafts that, to the admiring circle which sat at his feet, seemed so well directed and piercing. Perhaps they will read this to him:

Some turn the wheel of electricity, some suspend rings to a loadstone and find that what they did yesterday they can do again to-day. Some register the changes of the wind, and die fully convinced that the wind is changeable. There are men yet more profound, who have heard that two colourless liquors may produce a colour by union, and that two cold bodies will grow hot if they are mingled; they mingle them, and produce the effect expected, say it is strange, and mingle them again.

Admirable old boy! What wit you had! We can still enjoy it even though time has turned it to foolishness and planted its barb in your own breast. All your roaring, sir, will not take the barb out. All your genius for argument will not prevail against the witness you see of the mighty fruits of those little experiments that filled your Olympian mind with scorn. But you will have your compensations. Even you will be astonished at the place you fill in our thoughts so long after your queer figure 'and brown wig were last seen in Fleet Street. You will find that the very age in which you lived is remembered as the Age of Johnson, and that the thunders of your voice, transmitted by the faithful Bozzy, are among the immortal reverberations from the past. Yes, sir, in spite of the scientists, you will go back very well content with your visit.

IF JEREMY CAME BACK

And it may be that the victory of the scientists will assuage the disappointment of Jeremy himself. It is possible that when, back once more in whatever region of heaven is reserved for philosophers, he begins to reflect on all he has seen, Jeremy will recover his spirits. This moral catastrophe of man, he will say, must be seen in relation to his astonishing intellectual victory. I forgot that stage in the journey to the heavenly city of Utilitarianism. This century that has passed has witnessed that stage. It has been a period of inconceivable triumph over matter. Man has discovered all the wonders of the earth and is dazzled and drunk with the conquest of things. His moral and social sense has not been able to keep pace with this breathless material development. He has lost his spiritual bearings in the midst of the gigantic machine that his genius has fashioned. He has become the slave of his own creation, the victim of the monster of his invention, and this calamity into which he has fallen is his blind effort to readjust his life to the new scheme of things that the machine has imposed on him. The great parturition is upon him and he is shedding gouts of blood in his agony. But he will emerge from his pains. The material century is accomplished; the conquest of the machine is at hand, and with that conquest the moral sense of man will revive with a grandeur undreamed of in the past. The march is longer than I thought, but it will gain impetus and majesty from this immense overthrow. The road I built was only premature. Man was not ready to take it. But it is still there—a little grass-

grown and neglected, but still beckoning him on to the earthly paradise. When he rises from his wrestle in the dark, his sight will clear and he will surely take it. . . . Yes, I think I shall go back after all. . . .

Unteachable old optimist, murmurs the cynic at his side.

FEBRUARY DAYS

THE snow has gone from the landscape and the sun, at the hour of setting, has got round to the wood that crowns the hill on the other side of the valley. Soon it will set on the slope of the hill and then down on the plain. Then we shall know that spring has come. Two days ago a blackbird, from the paddock below the orchard, added his golden baritone to the tenor of the thrush who had been shouting good news from the beech tree across the road for weeks past. I don't know why the thrush should glimpse the dawn of the year before the blackbird, unless it is that his habit of choosing the topmost branches of the tree gives him a better view of the world than that which the golden-throated fellow gets on the lower branches that he always affects. It may be the same habit of living in the top story that accounts for the early activity of the rooks. They are noisy neighbours, but never so noisy as in these late February days, when they are breaking up into families and quarrelling over their slatternly household arrangements in the topmost branches of the elm trees. They are comic ruffians who wash all their dirty linen in public, and seem almost as disorderly and bad-tempered as

the human family itself. If they had only a little of our ingenuity in mutual slaughter there would be no need for my friend the farmer to light bonfires underneath the trees in order to drive the female from the eggs and save his crops.

.A much more amiable little fellow, the great tit, has just added his modest assurance that spring is coming. He is not much of a singer, but he is good hearing to any one whose thoughts are turning to his garden and the pests that lurk therein for the undoing of his toil. The tit is as industrious a worker in the garden as the starling, and, unlike the starling, he has no taste for my cherries. A pair of blue tits have been observed to carry a caterpillar to their nest, on an average every two minutes for the greater part of the day. That is the sort of bird that deserves encouragement—a bird that loves caterpillars and does not love cherries. There are very few creatures with so clean a record. So hang out the coco-nut as a sign of goodwill.

And yet, as I write, I am reminded that in this imperfect world where no unmixed blessing is vouchsafed to us, even the tit does not escape the general law of qualified beneficence. For an hour past I have been agreeably aware of the proximity of a great tit who, from a hedge below the orchard, has been singing his little see-saw song with unremitting industry. Now behold him. There he goes flitting and pirouetting with that innocent grace which, as he skips in and out of the hedge just in front of you, suggests that he is inviting you to a game of hide-and-seek. But not now. Now he is revealing the

evil that dwells in the best of us. Now he reminds us that he too is a part of that nature which feeds so relentlessly on itself. See him over the hives, glancing about in his own erratic way and taking his bearings. Then, certain that the coast is clear, he nips down and taps upon one of the hives with his beak. He skips away to await results. The trick succeeds; the doorkeeper of the hive comes out to inquire into the disturbance, and down swoops the great tit and away he flies with his capture. An artful fellow in spite of his air of innocence.

There is no affectation of innocence about that robust fellow the starling. He is almost as candid a ruffian as the rook, and three months hence I shall hate him with an intensity that would match Caligula's "Oh, that the Romans had only one neck!" For then he will come out of the beech woods on the hill-side for his great annual spring offensive against my cherry trees, and in two or three days he will leave them an obscene picture of devastation, every twig with its desecrated fruit and the stones left bleaching in the sun. But in these days of February I can be just even to my enemy. I can admit without reserve that he is not all bad any more than the other winsome little fellow is all good. See him on autumn or winter days when he has mobilized his forces for his forages in the fields, and is carrying out those wonderful evolutions in the sky that are such a miracle of order and rhythm. Far off, the cloud approaches like a swirl of dust in the sky, expanding, contracting, changing formation, breaking up into battalions, merging into columns, opening out on a wide front, throwing out

flanks and advance guards and rear guards, every complication unravelled in perfect order, every movement as serene and assured as if the whole cloud moved to the beat of some invisible conductor below—a very symphony of the air, in which motion merges into music, until it seems that you are not watching a flight of birds, but listening with the inner ear to great waves of soundless harmony. And then, the overture over, down the cloud descends upon the fields, and the farmers' pests vanish before the invasion. And if you will follow them into the fields* you will find infinite tiny holes that they have drilled and from which they have extracted the lurking: enemy of the crops, and you will remember that it is to their beneficial activities that we owe the extermination of the May beetle, whose devastations were so menacing a generation ago. And after the flock has broken up and he has paired, and the responsibilities of housekeeping have begun, he continues his worthy labours. When spring has come you can see him dart from his nest in the hollow of the tree and make a journey a minute to the neighbouring field, returning each time with a chafer-grub or a wire-worm or some other succulent but pestiferous morsel for the young and clamorous family at home. That acute observer, Mr. G. G. Desmond, says that he has counted eighteen such journeys in fifteen minutes. What matter a few cherries for a fellow of such benignant spirit?

But wait, my dear sir, wait until June brings the ripening cherries and see how much of this magnanimity of February is left.

Sir, I refuse to be intimidated by June or any other

Consideration. Sufficient unto the day——And to-day I will think only good of the sturdy fellow in the coat of mail. To-day I will think only of the brave news that is abroad. It has got into the hives. On fine days such as this stray bees sail out for water, bringing the agreeable tidings that all is well within, that the queen bee is laying her eggs, "according to plan," and that moisture is wanted in the hive. There are a score of hives in the orchard, and they have all weathered the winter and its perils. We saw the traces of one of those perils when the snow still lay on the ground. Around each hive were the footmarks of a mouse. He had come from a neighbouring hedge, visited each hive in turn, found there was no admission and had returned to the hedge no doubt hungrier than he came. Poor little wretch! to be near such riches, lashings of sweetness and great boulders of wax, and not be able to get bite or sup. I see him trotting back through the snow to his hole, a very dejected mouse. Oh, these new-fangled hives that don't give a fellow a chance!

In the garden the news is coming up from below, borne by those unfailing outriders of the spring, the snowdrop and the winter aconite. A modest company; but in their pennons is the assurance of the many-coloured host that is falling unseen into the vast pageant of summer and will fill the woods with the trumpets of the harebell and the wild hyacinth, and make the hedges burst into foam, and the orchard a glory of pink and white, and the ditches heavy with the scent of the meadowsweet, and the fields golden with harvest and the gardens a riot of luxuriant life.

I said it was all right, chirps little red waistcoat from the fence—all the winter I Ve told you that there was a good time coming and now you see for yourself. Look at those flowers. Ain't they real? The philosopher in the red waistcoat is perfectly right. He has kept his end up all through the winter, and has taken us into his fullest confidence. Formerly he never came beyond the kitchen, but this winter when the snow was about he advanced to the parlour where he potted about like one of the family. Now, however, with the great news outside and the earth full of good things to pick up, he has no time to call.

Even up in the woods that are still gaunt with winter and silent, save for the ringing strokes of the woodcutters in some distant clearing, the message is borne in the wind that comes out of the west at the dawn of the spring, and is as unlike the wind of autumn as the spirit of the sunrise is unlike the spirit of the sunset. It is the lusty breath of life coming back to the dead earth, and making these February days the most thrilling of the year. For in these expanding skies and tremors of life and unsealings of the secret springs of nature all is promise and hope, and nothing is for regret and lament. It is when fulfilment comes that the joy of possession is touched with the shadow of parting. The cherry blossom comes like a wonder and goes like a dream, carrying the spring with it, and the dirge of summer itself is implicit in the scent of the lime trees and the failing note of the cuckoo. But in these days of birth when

Youth, inexpressibly fair, wakes like a wondering rose

there is no hint of mortality and no reverted glance. The curtain is rising and the pageant is all before us.

A LEGEND OF THE WAR

I WAS going down to the country the other night when I fell into conversation with a soldier who was going home on leave. He was a reservist, who, after leaving the army, had taken to gardening, and who had been called up at the beginning of the war. He had many interesting things to tell, which he told in that unromantic, matter-of-fact fashion peculiar to the British soldier. But something he said about his cousin led him to make a reference to Lord Kitchener, and I noticed that he spoke of the great soldier as if he were living.

"But," said I, "do you think Kitchener wasn't drowned?"

"Yes," he replied, "I can't never believe he was drowned."

"But why?"

"Well, he hadn't no escort. You're not going to make me believe he didn't know what he was doing when he went off and didn't have no escort. It stands to reason. He wasn't no stick of rhubub, as you might say. He was a hard man on the soldier, but he had foresight, he had. He could look ahead. That's what he could do. He could look ahead. What did he say about the war? Three years, he said, or the duration, and he was about right. He

wasn't the man to get drowned by an oversight—not him. Stands to reason.

"Same with Hector Macdonald," he said, warming to his theme. "He's alive right enough. He's fighting for the Germans. Why, I know a man who see him in a German uniform before the war began. I should know him if I see him. He inspected me often. He made a fool of himself at Monte Carlo and that sort o' thing, and just went off to get a new start, as you might say.

"And look at Hamel. He ain't dead—course not. He went to Germany—that's what he did. Stands to reason."

"And what has become of Kitchener?" I asked. "Is he fighting for the Germans too?"

Well, no. That was too tall an order even for his credulity. He boggled a bit at the hedge and then proceeded:

"He 's laying by—that's what he 's doing. He 's laying by. You see, he 'd done his job. He raised his army and made the whole job, as you may say, safe, and he wasn't going to take a back seat and be put in a corner. Not him. Stands to reason. Why should he? And him done all what he had done. So he just goes off and lays by until he 's wanted again. Then he 'll turn up all right. You 'll see."

"But the ship was blown up," I said, "and only one boatload of survivors came to shore. There were eight hundred men who perished with Lord Kitchener, Not one has been heard of. Are they all 'laying by'? And where are they hiding? And why? And were they all in Lord Kitchener's secret?"

He seemed a little gruelled by these considerations, but unmoved.

"I can't never believe that he's dead," he said with the air of a man who didn't want to be awkward and would oblige if he possibly could. "I can't do it. . . . With his foresight and all. . . . And no escort, mind you. . . . No, I can't believe it. . . . Stands to reason."

And as he sank back in his seat and lit a cigarette I realized that the legend of Kitchener had passed beyond the challenge of death. I had heard much of that legend, much of mysterious letters from prisoners in Germany who had seen a very tall and formidable-looking man and hinted that that man's name was—well, whose would you think? Why, of course . . . But here was the popular legend in all its naked simplicity and absoluteness. It did not rest upon fact. It defied all facts and all evidence. It was an act of tyrannic faith. He was not dead, because the mind simply refused to believe that he was dead. And so he was alive. And there you are.

No doubt there was much in the circumstances of the great soldier's end that helped the growth of the myth. He filled so vast a place in the public mind and vanished so swiftly that his total disappearance seemed unthinkable. No living man had seen him die and no man had seen his body in death. He had just walked out into the night, and from the night he would return.

But, apart from the mystery of circumstance, the legend is a tribute to the strange fascination which this remarkable man exercised over the popular

mind. It endowed him with qualities which were supernatural. In a world rilled with the tragedy of mortality, here was a man who could daunt death itself. And when death stabbed him suddenly in the dark of that wild night off the Orkneys and flung his body to the wandering seas, the popular mind rejected the thought as a sort of blasphemy and insisted on his victory over the enemy. "Stands to reason." That's all. It just "stands to reason."

It seems a childish superstition, and yet if we could probe this belief to the bottom we might find that there is a truth beneath the apparent foolishness. It is that truth which Whitman, in his *Drum-Taps*, expresses over his fallen comrade—

**O the bullet could never kill what you really are, dear friend,
Nor the bayonet stab what you really are.**

There is something in the heroic soul that defies death, and the simple mind only translates that faith in the deathlessness of the spirit into material terms. Drake lies in his hammock in Nombre Dios Bay, but he lies "listening for the drum and dreamin' arl the time of Plymouth Hoe."

**Call him on the deep sea, call him up the Sound,
Pall him when your powder 's running low—
" If the Dons sight Devon
I 'll leave the port of Heaven,
And we 'll drum them up the Channel as we drummed
them long ago."**

And so the legend of Drake's drum lives on, and long centuries after, in the midst of another and fiercer storm, men sail the seas and hear that ghostly inspiration to brave deeds and brave death. The

torch of a great spirit never goes out. It is handed on from generation to generation and flames brightest when the night is darkest. And that I think is the truth that dwells at the back of my companion's obstinate credulity. Kitchener has become to him a symbol of something that cannot die, and his nonmetaphysical mind must have some material immortality to give his faith an anchorage.. And so, out in the vague shadows of the borderland he sees the stalwart figure still at his post—"laying by," it is true, but watching and waiting and "listening for the drum" that shall summon him back to the field of action.

As the train slowed down at a country station and he prepared to go out into the night, he repeated in firm but friendly accents: "No, I can't never believe that he's dead. . . . Stands to reason." And as he bade me "Good-night," I said, "I think you are right. I think he is living, too." And as the door closed, I added to myself, "Stands to reason."

TWO DRINKS OF MILK

THE cabin lay a hundred yards from the hot, dusty road, midway between Sneam and Derrynane, looking across the noble fiord of Kenmare River and out to the open Atlantic.

A barefooted girl with hair black as midnight was driving two cows down the rocks.

We put our bicycles in the shade and ascended the rough rocky path to the cabin door. The barefooted girl had marked our coming and received us.

Milk? Yes. Would we come in?

We entered. The transition from the glare of the sun to the cool shade of the cabin was delicious. A middle-aged woman, probably the mother of the girl, brushed the seats of two chairs for us with her apron, and having done that drove the chickens which were grubbing on the earthen floor out into the open. The ashes of a turf fire lay on the floor and on a bench by the ingle sat the third member of the family.

She was a venerable woman, probably the grandmother of the girl; but her eye was bright, her faculties unblunted, and her smile as instant and untroubled as a child's. She paused in her knitting to make room for me on the bench by her side, and while the girl went out for the milk she played the hostess.

If you have travelled in Kerry you don't need to be told of the charm of the Kerry peasantry. They have the fascination of their own wonderful country, with its wild rocky coast encircling the emerald glories of Killarney. They are at once tragic and childlike. In their eyes is the look of an ancient sorrow; but their speech is fresh and joyous as a spring morning. They have none of our Saxon reserve and aloofness, and to know them is to forgive that saying of the greatest of the sons of Kerry, O'Connell, who remarked that an Englishman had all the qualities of a poker except its occasional warmth. The Kerry peasant is always warm with the sunshine of comradeship. He is a child of nature, gifted with wonderful facility of speech and with a simple joy in giving pleasure to others. It is impossible to be lonely in Kerry, for every peasant you meet is a gentleman anxious to do

you a service, delighted if you will stop to talk, privileged if you will only allow him to be your guide. It is like being back in the childhood of the world, among elemental things and an ancient, unhasting people.

The old lady in the cabin by the Derrynane road seemed to me a duchess in disguise. That is, she had just that gracious repose of manner that a duchess ought to have. She knew no bigger world than the village of Sneam, five miles away. Her life had been passed in this little cabin and among these barren rocks. But the sunshine was in her heart and she had caught something of the majesty of the great ocean that gleamed out there through the cabin door. Across that sunlit water generations of exiles had gone to far lands. Some few had returned and some had been for ever silent. As I sat and listened I seemed to hear in those gentle accents all the tale of a stricken people and of a deserted land. There was no word of complaint—only a cheerful acceptance of the decrees of Fate. There is the secret of the fascination of the Kerry temperament—the happy sunlight playing across the sorrow of things.

The girl returned with a huge, rough earthen-bowl of milk, filled almost to the brim, and a couple of mugs.

We drank and then rose to leave, asking as we did so what there was to pay.

"Sure, there 's nothing to pay," said the old lady with just a touch of pride in her sweet voice. "There 's not a cabin in Kerry where you 'll not be welcome to a drink of milk."

The words sang in the mind all the rest of that summer day, as we bathed in the cool waters that lapped the foot of the cliffs near Derrynane, and as we toiled up the stiff gradient of Coomma Kistie Pass. And they added a benediction to the grave night when, seated in front of Teague M'Carty's hotel—Teague, the famous fisherman and more famous fly-maker, whose rooms are filled with silver cups, the trophies of great exploits among the salmon and trout, and whose hat and coat are stuck thick with many-coloured flies—we saw the moon rise over the bay at Waterville and heard the wash of the waves upon the shore.

When cycling from Aberfeldy to Killin you will be well advised to take the northern shore of Loch Tay, where the road is more level and much better made than that on the southern side. (I speak of the days before the coming of the motor which has probably changed all this.)

In our ignorance of the fact we had taken the southern road. It was a day of brilliant sunshine and inimitable thirst. Midway along the lake we dismounted and sought the hospitality of a cottage—neat and well-built, a front garden gay with flowers, and all about it the sense of plenty and cleanliness. A knock at the door was followed by the bark of a dog. Then came the measured tramp of heavy boots along the flagged interior. The door opened, and a stalwart man in shooting jacket and leggings, with a gun under his arm and a dog at his heels, stood before

us. He looked at us with cold firmness to hear our business. We felt that we had made a mistake. We had disturbed someone who had graver affairs than thirsty travellers to attend to.

Milk? Yes. He turned on his heel and stalked with great strides back to the kitchen. We stood silent at the door. Somehow, the day seemed suddenly less friendly.

In a few minutes the wife appeared with a tray bearing a jug and two glasses. She was a capable, neatly-dressed woman, silent and severe of feature. While we poured out the milk and drank it, she stood on the doorstep, looking away across the lake to where the noble form of Schiehallion dominates the beautiful Rannoch country. We felt that time was money and talk foolishness, and drank our milk with a sort of guilty haste.

"What have we to pay, please?"

"Sixpence."

And the debt discharged, the lady turned and closed the door.

It was a nice, well-kept house, clean and comfortable; but it lacked something that made the cabin on the Derrynane road a fragrant memory.

THOSE PEOPLE NEXT DOOR

THE case which has occupied the courts recently of the man who beat a tin can as a way of retaliating upon a neighbour who strummed the piano touches one of the most difficult problems of urban life. We who live in the cities all have neighbours, and

for the most part "thin partitions do our realms divide." It is true that, however thin the walls, we seldom know our neighbours. If the man who has lived next door to me in a Northern suburb for the last half-dozen years stopped me in the Strand or came and sat down beside me in a restaurant I should not, as the saying is, know him from Adam. In this vast whirlpool of London he goes his way and I go mine, and I dare say our paths will not cross though we go on living beside each other until one or other of us takes up a more permanent abode.

I do not know whether he is short or tall, old or young, or anything about him, and I dare say he is in the same state of contented ignorance about me. I hear him when he pokes the fire on his side late at night, and I suppose he hears me when I poke the fire on my side. Our intercourse is limited to the respective noises we make with the fire-irons, the piano, and so on. When he has friends to visit him we learn something about him from the sounds they make, the music they affect, and the time they go away (often unconscionably late). But apart from that vague intimation, my neighbour might be living in Mars and I might be living in Sirius, for all we know, or care, about each other. Perhaps some day his house (or mine) will be on fire, and then I dare say we shall become acquainted. But apart from some such catastrophe as this there seems no reason why we should ever exchange a word on this side of the grave.

It is not pride or incivility on either side that keeps us remote from each other. It is simply our London

way. People are so plentiful that they lose their identity. By the Whitestone Pond at Hampstead not long ago I met my old friend John O'Connor—"Long John," as he was affectionately called in the House of Commons, of which he was for so long one of the most popular members—and he said, in reply to inquiries, that he was living in Frognal, had lived there for years, "next door to Robertson Nicoll—not that I should know him," he added, "for I don't think I have ever set eyes on him." And I should have expected to find that Sir William was no better informed about his neighbour than his neighbour was about him. In London men are as lonely as oysters, each living in his own shell. We go out into the country to find neighbours. If the man next door took a cottage a mile away from me in the country I should probably know all about him, his affairs, his family, his calling, and his habits inside a week, and be intimate enough with him in a fortnight to borrow his garden-shears or his bill-hook. This is not always so idyllic as it seems. Village life can be poisoned by neighbours until the victim pines for the solitude of a London street, where neighbours are so plentiful that you are no more conscious of their individual existence than if they were blackberries on a hedgerow.

On the occasions on which we become acutely conscious of our neighbours, the temptation is to think ill of them. For example, we were all late the other morning, and Matilda, whose function it is to keep us up to time, explained that she had overslept herself because of those people next door. Four o'clock it was, m'm, before the din ended. Some of

us had lost count of the hours at two and others at three, but Matilda was emphatic. She had heard the last of the revellers go away in a car, and had looked at her watch and it was exactly four. No one disputed her word. It was gratifying to know that the hour was four rather than three. If it had been five we should doubtless have been still more gratified. It would have made the case against those people next door still blacker. And it can never be too black for their deserts. Our neighbours are at once too near to us and too far away from us. If they were under our own roof we might be able to make something of them; if they were only in the next street we could forget all about them. But they are just far enough away to escape our celestial influence and quite close enough to be a nuisance.

They are always in the wrong. Consider the hours they keep—entirely different from our hours and therefore entirely reprehensible. If they do not offend by their extravagant piety they shock you by their levity. Perhaps they play tennis on Sunday, or perhaps they don't, and in either case they are vulnerable to criticism. They always manage to be gay when you are sleepy. They take a delight in going away for more holidays than you can possibly have, or perhaps they don't go away for holidays at all, in which case their inferiority is clearly established. If they are not guilty of criminal waste, they can be convicted of shabby parsimony. They either dress too luxuriously or do not dress luxuriously enough for the decencies of the neighbourhood. We suspect that they are no better than they should be. Observe the

frequency with which their servants come and go. Depend upon it, they find those people next door impossible. Their habits and their friends, the music they play, the pets that they keep, the politics they affect, the newspapers they read—all these things confirm our darkest fears.

It is possible to believe anything about them—especially the worst. What are those strange sounds that penetrate the wall in the small hours? Surely that is the chink of coin! And those sudden shrieks and gusts of laughter? Is there not an alcoholic suggestion about such undisciplined hilarity? We know too much about them, and do not know enough. They are revealed to us in fragments, and in putting the fragments together we do not spare them. There is nothing so misleading as half-heard and half-understood scraps. And the curious thing about those people next door is that, if you ever come to know them, you find they are not a bit like what you thought they were. You find to your astonishment that they have redeeming features. Perhaps they find that we have redeeming features too. For the chastening truth is that we all play the role of those people next door to somebody. We are all being judged, and generally very unfavourably judged, on evidence which, if we knew it, would greatly astonish us. It might help us to be a little more charitable about those people next door if we occasionally remembered that we are those people next door ourselves.

But the St. John's Wood case illustrates the frail terms on which immunity from annoyance by neighbours is enjoyed. Two musicians dwelling in one

house gave lessons to pupils on the piano, and the man next door, who objected to his peace being disturbed in this way, took his revenge by banging on tin cans, and otherwise making things unpleasant for the musicians. I do not know what the law said on the subject. It may be admitted that the annoyances were equal in effect, but they were not the same in motive. In the one case the motive was the reasonable one of earning an honest living: there was no deliberate intention of being offensive to the neighbours. In the other case, the motive was admittedly to make a demonstration against the neighbours. What is to be done in such circumstances? It is not an offence to play the piano in one's own house even for a living. On the other hand, it is hard, especially if you don't like music, or perhaps even more if you do, to hear the scales going on the piano next door all day.

The question of motive does not seem to be relevant. If my neighbour makes noises which render my life intolerable, it is no answer to say that he makes them for a living and without intending to destroy my peace. He does destroy my peace, and it is no comfort to be assured that he does not mean to. 'Hazlitt insisted that a man might play the trombone in his own house all day if he took reasonable measures to limit the annoyance to his neighbours; but Hazlitt had probably never lived beside a trombone. I find the argument is leading me on to the side of the tin-can gentleman, and I don't want it to do that, for my sympathies are with the musicians. And yet——

Well, let us avoid a definite conclusion altogether and leave the incident to make us generally a little more sensitive about the feelings of our neighbours. They cannot expect us never to play the piano, never to sit up late, nevpr to be a little hilarious, any more than we can expect never to be disturbed by them. But the amenities of neighbourliness require that we should mutually avoid being a nuisance to each other as much as we can. And if our calling compels us to be a little noisy, we should bear that in mind when we choose a house and when we choose the room in which we make our noises. The perfect neighbour is one whom we never see and whom we never hear except when he pokes the fire.

A DAY WITH THE BEES

THERE is a prevalent notion that the country is a good place to work in. The quiet of the country, so runs the theory, leaves the mind undistracted, calm, and able to concentrate on the task in hand. It is a plausible theory, but it is untrue. In town the movement, noise, and ceaseless unrest form a welter of sound that has no more personal significance than the lapping of the waves on the sea-shore. It does not disturb—it rather composes the mind. It is the irrelevant babble of the world, enormous but signifying nothing, in the midst of which the mind is at ease and self-contained. But in the country every sound has an individual meaning that breaks in upon the quiet and demands attention. It is not

general; it is particular. Take to-day, for example. I had sat down after breakfast, determined to traverse the Sahara on which I am engaged and to reach the oasis of a chapter-ending by nightfall.

But I had hardly begun when a bumble bee flew in .at the open door on one side of the room and made for the closed window on the other side. The buzz of a bumble bee in the open air makes a substantial volume of sound. But inside the room this turbulent fellow sounded like an aeroplane as he roared against the window-panes in his frantic efforts to get through. Give him time, I thought. He will discover that there is no thoroughfare by the window and will return by the way he came in. Let me get on with my work. But the bumble bee has as little sense in the matter of exits and entrances as the wasp has, and my visitor kept up such a thunder against the window-panes that I was compelled to surrender, got up, opened the window, and with a judicious thrust with a newspaper piloted the fellow out into the open air.

It was a bad beginning for the journey across the Sahara; but I sat down, composed myself afresh, and started again, ignoring the thrush who was calling his hardest to me just outside the window to come out and see what a glorious sunshiny day we had got at last. But I was hardly launched again on my journey when I became conscious of unusual sounds in the garden. I looked out and saw the odd man, who had been banking up the potatoes, shielding himself as if from a storm and uttering strange cries. I left the desert again and rushed out.

Everybody else in the house I found was rushing out. There, swirling like a cloud of dust across the garden, was a swarm of bees which had swept down from the hills and across the meadow land behind us and were evidently on the point of settling. They passed by the house with the boom of ten thousand wings and came to rest in a hawthorn bush on the road below. It was no business of mine. The expert was out with veil and gloves on for the fray and could very well manage without my help; but no amount of familiarity makes me able to resist the call of a swarm of bees, and I forgot all about Sahara until we returned triumphantly with a branch bearing a vast coagulated mass of bees and succeeded in housing them in a spare hive.

Then I remembered Sahara and, like Mr. Snodgrass (the exercise having warmed me unduly), I took off my coat and announced to myself that "Now I am about to begin." A ring at the telephone bell! A swarm of bees had settled on the roof of a house a mile or two away, and would we be so kind as to take them away. Off went the expert as fast as petrol could carry her, and I returned to my lonely plough and the desert sands. But this day was doomed for me by the warm sun that had set all the surplus population of the hives for miles round trekking to new quarters. The cold spring and the wet May and early June had kept the bee world quiescent. Looking in the hives we could see all the preparations for swarming in progress, but the weather had been unpropitious, and now with this sudden burst of summer all the tide of repressed life was released,

and it seemed that the whole countryside was alive with bees in flight from their crowded homes to new lodgings. Before the expert returned there was sensation once more in the garden. No. 5 had swarmed, and down between the spruce-trees and the hedge the air was thick with the migrants. Usually our swarms settle in the hedge while the couriers fly far and wide to reconnoitre for suitable quarters. And it is in this interval of waiting that they are hived afresh. But this swarm neither settled in the hedge nor flew away with that sudden inspiration which sometimes seizes them. They swirled round and round like a tornado that had lost its way. Then they were observed to be returning to the hive they had left.

Here was a mystery indeed. Had the queen changed her mind and gone back, or had she by some miracle eluded her enormous family? The arrival of the expert, with her new capture, relieved us of responsibility in the matter. She opened the hive and took out the frames on which the bees were massed, but the queen, discoverable by her larger size, was not to be seen. At last, outside on the path, we saw a group of bees and in the midst of them the queen. The adventure had been too much for her powers, or perhaps she had defective wings. She was put back in the hive, and what the workers thought about the flight that failed I shall never know. But a new home to which the queen had no need to fly was soon at their disposal.

By this time the day was far advanced, but my journey across Sahara had hardly begun, and even

now the interruptions from the bees were not at an end. For the third time there was commotion in the garden; on this occasion the note was tragedy. One of the hens, which had had some accident, was confined in a coop as a sort of convalescent home. Its water-supply was outside and thither the bees had gone to drink. One of them, objecting to the beak that came out of the coop, stung the hen near the eye, and the smell of the acid infuriated its fellows and soon the unhappy hen was enveloped in a cloud of bees, each stabbing it in its vulnerable spot. When its plight was discovered the poor creature was insensible and apparently dying. With difficulty the assailants were driven off and the victim was put out of its misery.

When night came I was still ploughing my lonely furrow with no hope of reaching the goal for which I had started out so hopefully in the morning. No, the country is too exciting a place to work in. Give me the solitude of London, where there are no bees to swarm and no thrushes to keep telling one what a fine day it is in the garden.

ON KEYHOLE MORALS

MY neighbour at the breakfast table complained that he had had a bad night. What with the gale and the crash of the seas, and the creaking of the timbers of the ship and the pair in the next cabin—especially the pair in the next cabin. . . . How they talked! It was two o'clock before they sank into silence.

And such revelations! He couldn't help overhearing them. He was alone in his cabin, and what was he to do? He couldn't talk to himself to let them know they were being overheard. And he didn't sing. And he hadn't a cough. And, in short, there was nothing for it but to overhear. And the things he heard—well. . . . And with a gesture of head, hands, and eyebrows he left it to me to imagine the worst. I suggested that he might cure the trouble by telling the steward to give the couple a hint that the next cabin was occupied. He received the idea as a possible way out of a painful and delicate situation. Strange, he said, it had not occurred to him.

Whether he adopted it I do not know. If I did I should know a very important thing about him. It would give me the clue to the whole man. It would tell me whether he was a willing or an unwilling eavesdropper, and there are few more searching tests of character than this. We are not to be catalogued by what we do in the open. We are all of us proper enough when we walk abroad and play our part in society. It is not our public hearing which reveals the sort of fellows we are. It only indicates the kind of fellows we desire the world to take us to be. We want the world's good opinion, and when we go out we put on our company manners as we put on our best clothes in order to win it. No one would put his ear to a keyhole if he thought an eye might be at the keyhole behind him watching him in the act. The true estimate of your character (and mine) depends on what we should do if we knew there was no keyhole behind us. It depends, not on whether

you are chivalrous to someone else's wife in public, but whether you are chivalrous to your own wife in private. The eminent judge who, checking himself in a torrent of abuse of his partner at whist, contritely observed, "I beg your pardon, madam; I thought you were my wife," did not improve matters. He only lifted the curtain of a rather shabby private cabin. He whitewashed himself publicly out of his dirty private pail.

Or, to take another sounding, what happens when you find yourself in the quiet and undisturbed presence of other people's open letters? Perhaps you have accidentally put on your son's jacket and discovered the pockets bulging with letters. Your curiosity is excited: your parental concern is awakened. It is not unnatural to be interested in your own son. It is natural and proper. You can summon up a score of convincing and weighty reasons why you should dip into those letters. You know that all those respectable reasons would become disreputable if you heard young John's step approaching. You know that this very reasonable display of paternal interest would suddenly become a mean act of prying of which you would be ashamed to be thought capable. But young John is miles off—perhaps down in the city, perhaps far away in the country. You are left alone with his letters and your own sense of decency. You can read the letters in perfect safety. If there are secrets in them you can share them. Not a soul will ever find you out. You may be entitled to know those secrets, and young John may be benefited by your knowing them.

What do you do in these circumstances? The answer will provide you with a fairly reliable tape measure for your own spiritual contents.

There is no discredit in being curious about the people in the next cabin. We are all curious about our neighbours. In his fable of *Le Diable Boiteux*, Lesage tells how the devil transported him from one house to another, lifted the roof, and showed what was going on inside, with very surprising and entertaining results. If the devil, in the guise of a very civil gentleman, paid me a call this evening, and offered to do the same for me, offered to spirit me over Hampstead and lift with magic and inaudible touch any roof I fancied, and show me the mysteries and privacies of my neighbours' lives, I hope I should have the decency to thank him and send him away. The amusement would be purchased at too high a price. It might not do my neighbours any harm, but it would do me a lot of harm. For, after all, the important thing is not that we should be able, like the honest blacksmith, to look the whole world in the face, but that we should be able to look ourselves in the face. And it is our private standard of conduct and not our public standard of conduct which gives or denies us that privilege. We are merely counterfeit coin if our respect for the Eleventh Commandment only applies to being found out by other people. It is being found out by ourselves that ought to hurt us.

It is the private cabin side of us that really matters. I could pass a tolerably good examination on my public behaviour. I have never committed a murder,

or a burglary. I have never picked a pocket, or forged a cheque. But these things are not evidence of good character. They may only mean that I never had enough honest indignation to commit a murder, nor enough courage to break into a house. They may only mean that I never needed to forge a cheque or pick a pocket. They may only mean that I am afraid of the police. Respect for the law is a testimonial that will not go far in the Valley of Jehosophat. The question that will be asked of me there is not whether I picked my neighbour's lock, but whether I put my ear to his keyhole; not whether I pocketed the bank note he had left on his desk, but whether I read his letters when his back was turned—in short, not whether I had respect for the law, but whether I had respect for myself and the sanctities that are outside the vulgar sphere of the law. It is what went on in my private cabin which will probably be my undoing.

HAPPY FACES IN THE STRAND

I WAS walking along the Strand a few afternoons ago and had a singular impression of a cheerful world. The Strand is to me always the most attractive street I know, especially on bright afternoons when the sun is drooping behind the Admiralty Arch and its light glints and dances in the eyes of the crowd moving westward. Then it is that I seem to see the wayfarers transfigured into a procession hurrying in pursuit of some sunlit adventure of the soul, and am almost persuaded to turn round and catch with them

the flash of vision that gleams in their eyes. But the thing that struck me this afternoon was the unusual gaiety of the people. It seemed to me that I had never seen such a procession of laughing, happy faces. Probably it was due to the fact that it was about the time when the afternoon theatres were emptying. Probably also the impression on my mind was all the sharper because it was a day of depressing tidings—bad news from Russia, from Italy, from everywhere. I did not suppose that these merry people were ignorant of the news or indifferent to it. They were simply obeying the impulse of healthy minds and good digestions to be cheerful—*quandmeme*.

And as I passed along I wondered whether, in spite of all the tragedy in which our life is cast, our fund of personal happiness is undiminished. Do we come into the world with a certain capacity for pleasure and pain and realize it no matter what our external circumstances may be? Johnson took that view and expressed it in the familiar lines incorporated in Goldsmith's *Traveller*—the only lines of Johnson's very pedestrian poetry which have won a sort of immortality:

How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which kings or laws can cause or cure.
Still to ourselves in every place consigned,
Our own felicity we make or find.

In its political intention I have always disagreed with this verse. Johnson was a Tory who loved liberty in its social meanings, but distrusted it as a political ideal and hated all agitation for reform. And because he hated reform he said that our

happiness had no relation to the conditions in which we live.

It is an argument which must be a great comfort to the slum-owner, the slave-owner, the profiteer, and all the odious people who live by exploiting others. And like most falsities there is a sense in which it is true. The child playing in a sunless court laughs as gaily and probably experiences as much animal happiness—assuming it is sufficiently fed and sufficiently warm—as the boy in the Eton playing fields. It is a mercy it is so. It is a mercy that we have this reservoir of defiant happiness within that answers the harsh and bitter blows of outward circumstance. But he who advances this fact as a political argument is not a wise man. Is the quality of happiness nothing? Is it nothing to us whether we find our happiness over a pint pot, or in the love of gardens, the beauties of the world, and the infinite fields of the mind's adventures? Is it nothing to society? We have learned that even the pig is better for a clean sty.

But putting aside the quality of happiness and its social aspects, there is much truth in Johnson's lines. Happiness is an entirely personal affair. We have it in large measure or in small, but in so far as we have it it is wholly and completely ours and not the sport of fortune. I do not say that if you put me in a dungeon it will not lessen the sum of my happiness, for personal freedom is the soul of happiness. If you are a sensitive person the sorrows of the world will afflict you, but they will afflict you as a personal thing, and it may be doubted whether their

magnitude will add to the affliction. I hope it is not a shocking thing to say, but I sometimes doubt, looking on the world as it appears to me and putting aside the infinity of sheer physical suffering, whether the sum of personal happiness is less to-day than in normal times.

I was talking the other day to a well-known author, who expressed satisfaction that he had had the good fortune to live in the most "interesting" period of the world's history. There was an indignant protest against the word from another member of the company; but the author insisted. Yes, interesting. Could not tragedy be interesting as well as comedy? Could not one feel all the horror and misery and insanity of this frightful upheaval, shoulder one's tasks, take one's part in the battle, and still preserve in the quiet chambers of the mind a detached and philosophic contemplation of the drama and pronounce it—yes, interesting? His own record of unselfish service during the war, and his passionate desire for a sane and ordered world, were too unquestionable for his meaning to be misunderstood.

And the idea he wished to convey was sound enough. There has never been an event on the earth which has so absorbed the thought, the energies, and the faculties of men as the catastrophe through which we are living. It overshadows every moment of our lives, colours everything that we do, roots up our habits, cuts down our food, breaks up our homes, scatters the dead like leaves over the plains of Europe, and sows the seas with the wreckage

of a thousand ships. I can fancy that when our great-grandchildren in 2017 look back upon the days of their forefathers they will picture us cowering like sheep before the tempest, with no thought except of the gigantic cataclysm that has overtaken us. In a sense they will be right. In another sense they will be wrong. We are living through a nightmare, but we laugh in our dreams. The vastness of the general calamity might be expected to plunge us individually in despair. But it doesn't. Individually we seem to preserve a defiant cheerfulness, snatch our pleasures with a sharpened appetite, can even find a fascination in the wild sky and the lightnings that stab the tortured earth.

As I look up I see the buses passing and read the announcements on the knife-boards. You might, reading them, suppose that we were living in the most light-hearted of worlds. There is *A Little Bit of Fluff* at one theatre, *High Jinks* at another, *Monty's Flapper* here, the *Bing Girls* there, and someone called Shirley Kellogg invites me to *Zig-Zag*. These, my dear child of A.D. 2017, are the things with which England amused itself in the time of the tempest. And do not forget also that it was during the Great War that Charlie Chaplin swept the two hemispheres with the magic of his incomparable idiocy. Perhaps without the Great War he could not have achieved such unparalleled renown. For this levity is largely a counterpoise to our anxieties—a violent reaction against events, an attempt to keep the balance of things even. The strain on us is so heavy that we tend to go a little wildly in extremes,

as the ship sailing through heavy seas plunges into the trough of the waves and then soars skyward, but preserves its equilibrium throughout.

We are seen both at our best and our worst—stripped naked as it were to the soul, our disguises gone, our real selves revealed to ourselves and to our neighbours, and with equal surprise to both. Our nerve-ends are bare, and our reactions to circumstance are violent and irrational. We are at once more generous and more bitter. We are the sport even of the weather. If we see the silver lining of our spiritual cloud more brilliantly when the sun laughs in our faces, our depression touches a more abysmal note when the east wind blows and we flounder in the slush of our winter nights. I could not help associating with the procession of happy faces in the Strand another widely different incident that I witnessed in a bus the other night. It seemed the reverse side of the same shield. A respectably dressed, middle-aged pair came in out of the darkness and the sleet. They were both rather large, and there was not much room, but they squeezed themselves into two vacant places with an air of silent resolution which indicated that they would stand no nonsense, knew how to demand their "rights" and had no civility to waste on anybody. You know the sort of people. If you don't get out of their way in double quick time they simply sit down on you. They do not say "Is there room?" or "Can you make room?" That would be a sign of weakness, an act of politeness, and they abominate politeness, except in other people. They expect it in other people.

"Where are you going to?" asked the woman when they were seated.

"Victoria," said the man with a snap.

"Well, you needn't bite my head *oft*," said the woman.

"I've told you six times," snapped the man.

"What a bully you are," retorted the woman. Then they subsided into silence. Husband and wife, I thought—bursting with a bad temper to such an extent that they boil over even in a bus full of people. Probably they have been snarling like that ever since their honeymoon, and will go on snarling until one puts on crape for the other.

But, on second thoughts, I concluded that this was probably unjust. They had come in out of the slush and the blackness, and had got the gloom of the London night in their souls. Most of us get it in our souls more or less. It makes us ill-humoured and depressed. In the early days there was a certain novelty in the darkened streets, and some ecstatic writers discovered that London had never been so beautiful before. They even wrote poems about it. When you blundered into a pillar-box and began making profuse apologies, or stumbled against the kerbstone, or fell into the arms of some invisible but substantial part of the darkness, or scurried frantically across Trafalgar Square, you felt that it was all part of the great adventure of war and was in its way rather romantic and exhilarating. But three winters of that experience have exhausted our enthusiasm and have made London at night a mere debauch of depression except for those who make it a debauch of another kind.

But whatever the explanation of that little scene in the bus, there is no doubt that as the long strain goes on it plays havoc with our nerves and our tempers. We are tired and angry with this mad world, and since we cannot visit our anger on the enemy we visit it very unreasonably on each other. The shattered vase of life lies in ruins at our feet, and there is an overmastering temptation to grind the fragments to dust rather than piece them together for the healing future to restore. We have lost faith in men, in principles, in ideals, in ourselves, and are subdued to the naked barbarism into which civilization has collapsed. Religion was never at so low an ebb, so openly repudiated, or, what is worse, so travestied by charlatans and blackguards. I heard the other day the description of an address at a public gathering by a person who mixed up his blasphemies about some new god of the creature's imagining with obscenities that would be impossible on a music-hall stage.

In the Divorce Court last week the counsel for the lady in the case gravely advanced the plea that in these days, when men are dying by the million in mud and filth, the women at home must not be denied their excitements, their flirtations and their late suppers. When Mars is abroad Venus must be abroad, too. Murder is the sole business of the world and lust is its proper pastime. Take a glance at any bookstall and note the garbage which lines its shelves. Dip into the morass of the popular Sunday newspapers with their millions of circulation and see the broth of foulness in which the great public take their weekly

intellectual bath. The tide has overwhelmed the Stage as it has overwhelmed the Church, and a wild levity companions our illimitable tragedy.

It is no new phenomenon. In time of peril humanity always reveals these extravagant contrasts, and Boccaccio, with the true instinct of the artist, set his tales of merriment and licentiousness against the background of a city perishing of plague. We live at once more intensely and more frivolously. The pendulum of our emotions swings violently from extreme to extreme and a defiant exhilaration answers the mood of depression and anxiety. I can conceive that that couple in the bus were quite merry when they saw the sun shine in the morning and read that Vimy Ridge had been won. There is, in Pepys's *Diary*, a delightful illustration of the swift transitions by which the mind in times of stress seeks to keep its equipoise. It is the 10th of September (Lord's Day), 1665. The plague is at its worst and the whole city seems doomed. The war with the Dutch is going badly. Mrs. Pepys's father is dying, and everything looks black. But there comes news of a success at sea and Pepys goes down the river to meet Lord Brouncker and Sir J. Minnes at Greenwich

where we supped [there was also Sir W. Doyly and Mr. Evelyn]; but the receipt of this news did put us all into such an extasy of joy that it inspired into Sir J. Minnes and Mr. Evelyn such a spirit of mirth that in all my life I never met so merry a two hours as our company this night. Among other humours, Mr. Evelyn's repeating of some verses made up of nothing but the various acceptations of *may* and *can*, and doing it so aptly upon occasion of something of that nature, and so fast, did make us all die almost with laughing, and did so stop

the mouth of Sir J. Minnes in the middle of all his mirth that I never saw any man so out-done in all my life; and Sir J. Minnes's mirth to see himself out-done was the crown of all our mirth.

Isn't that a wonderful picture? And think of the graye John Evelyn having this gaiety in him! You will read the whole of his *Diary* and not get one smile from his severe countenance. I had the curiosity to turn to his own record of the same time. He has no entry for the 10th, but two days before, he says:

Came home, there perishing neere 10,000 poor creatures weekly; however, I went all along the City and suburbs from Kent Streete to St. James's, a dismal passage, and dangerous to see so many coffins expos'd in the streetes, now thin of people; the shops shut up and all in mourneful silence, as not knowing whose turn might be next.

And then, at the receipt of a bit of good news this austere man is seized with "such an extasy of joy" that he gives Pepys the merriest evening of his life. And Pepys was a good judge of merry evenings.

The truth is expressed somewhere in Hardy's works, where he says that the soul's specific gravity is always less than that of the sea of circumstances into which it is cast, and rises unflinching to the surface. There comes to my mind as illustrating this truth a passage in that great and moving book *Under Fire*—the most tremendous picture of the horror and squalor of war ever painted by man. One of the squad of French soldiers with whom the book deals is in the trenches near Souchez and the Vimy Ridge. It is before the English had taken over that part of the line. There is a quiet time and some of

the men get on companionable terms with the enemy. This man's wife and child are in Lens, just behind the German lines. He has not seen them for eighteen months, and out of sheer good nature the German soldiers lend him a uniform and smuggle him into a coal fatigue which is going into Lens. He passes in the disguise among his enemy companions by his own house and sees through the open door his wife and the widow of a comrade sitting at their work. In the room with them are two German non-commissioned officers, and his child is on the knee of one of them.

But the thing that strikes him to the heart is the fact that his wife is smiling as she talks to the non-coms.—"Not a forced smile, not a debtor's smile, *non*, a real smile that came from *her*, that she gave." He did not doubt her affection or her loyalty, and when the bitterness had passed and he was back in his lines and telling his comrade of the adventure, he defended her from the criticism of his own mind in words of extraordinary beauty:

"She's quite young, you know; she's twenty-six. She can't hold her youth in, it's coming out of her all over, and when she's resting in the lamplight and the warmth, she's got to smile; and even if she burst out laughing, it would just simply be her youth singing in her throat. It isn't on account of others, if truth were told; it's on account of herself. It's life. She lives. Ah, yes, she lives and that's all. It isn't her fault if she lives. You wouldn't have her die? Very well, what do you want her to do? Cry all day on account of me and the Boches? Grouse? One can't cry all the time, nor grouse for eighteen months. Can't be done. It's too long, I tell you. That's all there is to it."

In that poignant story we touch the root of the

matter. We live. And, living, the light and shadow of life play across the surface of ourselves, though deep down in our hearts there is the sense of the unspeakable tragedy of things. We may wonder that we can be happy and may be rather ashamed of it, but "we live" and we cannot deny our natures. We may, like Miss Havisham, draw down the blinds, shut out the world, and dwell in darkness, but then we cease to live and become mad. We must laugh if only to keep our sanity, and nature arranges that we shall laugh even in the face of terrible things. There was a good deal of truth in the remark of the French lady to Boswell that "Our happiness depends on the circulation of the blood." The wild current of affairs sweeps us on whithersoever it will, but in our separate little eddies we whirl around and find relief in private distractions and pleasures that seem independent of the great march of events. Jane Austen wrote her novels in the midst of the Napoleonic wars, yet I cannot recall one hint in them of that world-shaking event. She mentioned a battle in one of her letters, but then only a little callously. And a friend of mine told me the other day that he had had the curiosity to turn up the newspaper files of the time- of Austerlitz and found that the public were apparently all agog, not about the battle that had changed the current of the world, but about the merits of the Infant Roscius. It is well that we have this faculty of detachment and independent life. If there were no private relief for this public tragedy the world would have gone mad. But perhaps you will say it has gone mad. . . .

Let me recall by way of *envoi* that fine story in Montaigne. When the town of Nola was destroyed by the barbarians, Paulinus, the bishop, was stripped of all he possessed and taken prisoner. And as he was led away he prayed, "O Lord, make me to bear this loss, for Thou knowest that they have taken nothing that is mine: the riches that made me rich and the treasures that made me worthy are still mine in their fullness."

ON COURAGE

I WAS asked the other day to send to a new magazine a statement as to the event of the war which had made the deepest impression on me. Without hesitation I selected the remarkable Christmas demonstrations in Flanders. Here were men who for weeks and months past had been engaged in the task of stalking each other and killing each other, and suddenly, under the influence of a common memory, they repudiate the whole gospel of war and declare the gospel of brotherhood. Next day they began killing each other again as the obedient instruments of governments they do not control and of motives they do not understand. But the fact remains. It is a beam of light in the darkness, rich in meaning and hope.

But if I were asked to name the instance of individual action which had most impressed me I should find the task more difficult. Should I select something that shows how war depraves, or something that shows how it ennobles? If the latter I

think I would choose that beautiful incident of the sailor on the *Formidable*.

He had won by ballot a place in one of the boats. The ship was going down, but he was to be saved. One pictures the scene: The boat is waiting to take him to the shore and safety. He looks at the old comrades who have lost in the ballot and who stand there doomed to death. He feels the passion for life surging within him. He sees the cold, dark sea waiting to engulf its victims. And in that great moment—the greatest moment that can come to any man—he makes the triumphant choice. He turns to one of his comrades. "You 've got parents/' he says. "I haven't." And with that word—so heroic in its simplicity—he makes the other take his place in the boat and signs his own death warrant.

I see him on the deck among his doomed fellows, watching the disappearing boat until the final plunge comes and all is over. The sea never took a braver man to its bosom. "Greater love hath no man than this. . ."

Can you read that story without some tumult within you—without feeling that humanity itself is ennobled by this great act and that you are, in some mysterious way, better for the deed? That is the splendid fruit of all such sublime sacrifice. It enriches the whole human family. It makes us lift our heads with pride that we are men—that there is in us at our best this noble gift of valiant unselfishness, this glorious prodigality that spends life itself for something greater than life. If we had met this nameless sailor we should have found him perhaps a

very ordinary man, with plenty of failings, doubtless, like the rest of us, and without any idea that he had in him the priceless jewel beside which crowns and coronets are empty baubles. He was something greater than he knew.

How many of us could pass such a test? What should I do? What would you do? We neither of us know, for we are as great a mystery to ourselves as we are to our neighbours. Bob Acres said he found that "a man may have a deal of valour in him without knowing it," and it is equally true that a man may be more chicken-hearted than he himself suspects. Only the occasion discovers of what stuff we are made—whether we are heroes or cowards, saints or sinners. A blustering manner will not reveal the one any more than a long face will reveal the other.

The merit of this sailor's heroism was that it was done with calculation—in cold blood, as it were, with that "two-o'clock-in-the-morning courage" of which Napoleon spoke as the real thing. Many of us could do brave things in hot blood, with a sudden rush of the spirit, who would fail if we had time, as this man had, to pause and think, to reckon, to doubt, to grow cold and selfish. The merit of his deed is that it was an act of physical courage based on the higher quality of moral courage.

Nor because a man fails in the great moment is he necessarily all a coward. Mark Twain was once talking to a friend of mine on the subject of courage in men, and spoke of a man whose name is associated with a book that has become a classic. "I knew him well," he said, "and I knew him as a brave man.

Yet he once did the most cowardly thing I have ever heard of any man. He was in a shipwreck, and as the ship was going down he snatched a lifebelt from a woman passenger and put it on himself. He was saved, and she was drowned. And in spite of that frightful act I think he was not a coward. I know there was not a day of his life afterwards when he would not willingly and in cold blood have given his life to recall that shameful act."

In this case the failure was not in moral courage, but in physical courage. He was demoralized by the peril, and the physical coward came uppermost. If he had had time to recover his moral balance he would have died an honourable death. It is no uncommon thing for a man to have in him the elements both of the hero and the coward. You remember that delightful remark of Mrs. Disraeli, one of the most characteristic of the many quaint sayings attributed to that strange woman. "Dizzy," she said, "has wonderful moral courage, but no physical courage. I always have to pull the string of his shower bath." 11 is a capital illustration of that conflict of the coward and the brave man that takes place in most of us. Dizzy's moral courage carried him to the bath, but there his physical courage failed him. He could not pull the string that administered the cold shock. The bathroom is rich in such secrets, and life teems with them.

The true hero is he who unites the two qualities. The physical element is the more plentiful. For one man who will count the cost of sacrifice and, having counted it, pay the price with unfaltering heart, there

are many who will answer the sudden call to meet peril with swift defiance. The courage that snatches a comrade from under the guns of the enemy or a child from the flames is, happily, not uncommon. It is inspired by an impulse that takes men out of themselves and by a certain spirit of challenge to fate that every one with a sporting instinct loves to take. But the act of the sailor of the *Formidable* was a much bigger thing. Here was no thrill of gallantry and no sporting risk. He dealt in cold certainties: the boat and safety; the ship and death; his life or the other's. And he thought of his comrade's old parents at home and chose death.

It was a great end. I wonder whether you or I would be capable of it. I would give much to feel that I could answer in the affirmative—that I could take my stand on the spiritual plane of that unknown sailor.

DOWN TOWN

THROUGH the grey mists that hang over the water in the late autumn afternoon there emerges a deeper shadow. It is like the serrated mass of a distant range of mountains, except that the sky-line is broken with a precision that suggests the work of man rather than the careless architecture of Nature. The mass is compact and isolated. It rises from the level of the water, sheer on either side, in bold precipitous cliffs, broken by horizontal lines, and dominated by one kingly, central peak that might

be the Matterhorn if it were not so suggestive to the spire of some cathedral fashioned for the devotions of a Cyclopean race. As the vessel from afar moves slowly through the populous waters and between the vaguely denned shores of the harbour, another shadow emerges ahead, rising out of the sea in front of the mountain mass. It is a colossal statue, holding up a torch to the open Atlantic.

Gradually, as you draw near, the mountain range takes definition. It turns to houses made with hands, vast structures with innumerable windows. Even the star-y-pointing spire is seen to be a casement of myriad windows. The day begins to darken and a swift transformation takes place. Points of light begin to shine from the windows like stars in the darkening firmament, and soon the whole mountain range glitters with thousands of tiny lamps. The sombre mass has changed to a fairy palace, glowing with illuminations from the foundations to the top-most height of the giddy precipices, the magic spectacle culminating in the scintillating pinnacle of the slender cathedral spire. The first daylight impression was of something as solid and enduring as the foundations of the earth; the second, in the gathering twilight, is of something slight and fanciful, of towering proportions but infinitely fragile structure, a spectacle as airy and dream-like as a tale from the *Arabian Nights*.

It is "down town." It is America thrusting out the spear-head of its astonishing life to the Atlantic. On the tip of this tongue of rock that lies between the Hudson River and the East River is massed the

greatest group of buildings in the world. Behind the mountain range, all over the tongue of rock for a dozen miles and more, stretches an incalculable maze of streets, not rambling about in the easy-going, forgetful fashion of the London street, which generally seems a little uncertain of its direction, but running straight as an arrow, north and south, or east and west, crosswise between the Hudson and the East River longwise to the Harlem River, which joins the two streams, and so forms this amazing island of Manhattan. And in this maze of streets, through which the noble Fifth Avenue marches like a central theme, there are many lofty buildings that shut out the sunlight from the causeway and leave it to gild the upper stories of the great stores and the towers of the many churches and the gables of the houses of the merchant princes, giving, on a sunny afternoon, a certain cloistral feeling to the streets as you move in the shadows with the sense of the golden light filling the air above. And around the Grand Central Station, which is one of the architectural glories of "up town" New York, the great hotels stand like mighty fortresses that dwarf the delicate proportions of the great terminus. And in the Hotel MacAlpin off Fifth Avenue you may be whirled to the twenty-fourth floor before you reach the dining-room to which you are summoned.

But it is in "down town," on the tip of the tongue that is put out to the Atlantic, that New York reveals itself most startlingly to the stranger. It is like a gesture of power. There are other cities, no doubt, that make an equally striking appeal to the eye—

Salzburg, Innsbruck, Edinburgh, Tunis—but it is the appeal of nature supplemented by art. Generally the great cities are untheatrical enough. There is not an approach to London, or Paris, or Berlin, which offers any shock of surprise. You are sensible that you are leaving the green fields behind, that factories are becoming more frequent, and streets more continuous, and then you find that you have arrived. But New York and, through New York, America greets you with its most typical spectacle before you land. It holds it up as if in triumphant assurance of its greatness. It ascends its topmost tower and shouts its challenge and its invitation over the Atlantic. "Down town" stands like a strong man on the shore of the ocean, asking you to come in to the wonderland that lies behind these terrific battlements. See, he says, how I toss these towers to the skies. Look at this muscular development. And I am only the advance agent. I am only the symbol of what lies behind. I am only a foretaste of the power that heaves and throbs through the veins of the giant that bestrides this continent for three thousand miles, from his gateway to the Atlantic to his gateway to the Pacific and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico.

And if, after the long monotony of the sea, the impression of this terrific gateway from without holds the mind, the impression from within stuns the mind. You stand in the Grand Canon, in which Broadway ends, a street here no wider than Fleet Street, but a street imprisoned between two precipices that rise perpendicular to an altitude more lofty than the cross of St. Paul's Cathedral—square towers, honeycombed

with thousands of rooms, with scurrying hosts of busy people, flying up in lifts—called "elevators" for short—clicking at typewriters, performing all the myriad functions of the great god Mammon, who reigns at the threshold of the giant.

For this is the very keep of his castle. Here is the throne from which he rules the world. This little street running out of the Grand Canon is Wall Street, and that low, modest building, looking curiously demure in the midst of these monstrous bastions, is the House of Morgan, the high priest of Big Money. A whisper from this street and distant worlds are shaken. Europe, beggared by the war, stands, cap in hand, on the kerbstone of Wall Street, with its francs and its marks and its sovereigns wilting away before the sun of the mighty dollar. And as you stand in devout respect before the modest threshold of the high priest, a babel of strange sounds comes up from Broad Street near by. You turn towards it and come suddenly upon another aspect of Mammon, more strange than anything pictured by Hogarth—in the street a jostling mass of human beings, fantastically garbed, wearing many-coloured caps like jockeys or pantaloons, their heads thrown back, their arms extended high as if in prayer to some heathen deity, their fingers working with frantic symbols, their voices crying in agonized frenzy, and at a hundred windows in the great buildings on either side of the street little groups of men and women gesticulating back as wildly to the mob below. It is the outside market of Mammon.

You turn from this strange nightmare scene and

seek the solace of the great cathedral that you saw from afar towering over these battlements like the Matterhorn. The nearer view does not disappoint you. Slender and beautifully proportioned, it rises in great leaps to a pinnacle nearly twice as high as the cross of St. Paul's Cathedral. It is the temple of St. Woolworth. Into this masterpiece he poured the wealth acquired in his sixpenny bazaars, and there it stands, the most significant building in America and the first turret to catch the noose of light that the dawn flings daily over the Atlantic from the East. You enter its marble halls and take an express train to the forty-ninth floor, flashing in your journey past visions of crowded offices, tier after tier, offices of banks and publishers and merchants and jewellers, like a great street, Piccadilly or the Strand, that has been miraculously turned skywards by some violent geological "fault." And at the forty-ninth floor you get out and take another "local" train to the top, and from thence you look giddily down, far down even upon the great precipices of the Grand Canon, down to the streets where the moving throng you left a few minutes ago looks like a colony of ants or black-beetles wandering uncertainly over the pavement.

And in the midst of the great fortresses of commerce, two toy buildings with tiny spires. You have been in them, perhaps, and know them to be large churches, St. Paul's and Trinity, curiously like our own City churches. Once New York nestled under their shadows; now they are swallowed up and lost at the base of the terrific structures that loom above them. In one of them you will have seen the pew of George

Washington still decorated with the flag of the thirteen stars of the original union. Perhaps you will be tempted to see in this inverted world an inverted civilization. There will flash on your mind's eye the vision of the great dome that seems to float in the heavens over the secular activities of another city, still holding aloft, to however negligent and indifferent a generation, the symbol of the supremacy of spiritual things. And you will wonder whether in this astonishing spectacle below you, in which the temples of the ancient worship crouch at the porch of these Leviathan temples of commerce, there is the unconscious expression of another philosophy of life in which St. Woolworth and not St. Paul points the way to the stars.

And for the correction to this disquieting thought you turn from the scene below to the scene around. There in front lies the harbour, so near that you feel you could cast a stone into it. And beyond, the open Atlantic, with all its suggestions of the tide of humanity, a million a year, that has flowed, with its babel of tongues and its burden of hopes, past the statue with the torch that stands in the midst of the harbour, to be swallowed up in the vastness of the great continent that lies behind you. You turn and look over the enormous city that, caught in the arms of its two noble rivers, extends over many a mile before you, with its overflow of Brooklyn on the far bank of one stream, and its overflow of Jersey City on the far bank of the other. In the brilliant sunshine and the clear, smokeless atmosphere the eye travels far over this incredible vista of human activity. And

beyond the vision of the eye, the mind carries the thought onward to the great lakes and the seething cities by their shores, and over the illimitable plains westward to sunny lands more remote than Europe, but still obedient to the Stars and Stripes, and southward by the great rivers to the tropic sea.

And, as you stand on this giddy pinnacle, looking over New York to the far horizons, you find your mind charged with enormous questionings. They will not be diminished when, after long journeyings towards those horizons, after days and nights of crowded experiences in many fields of activity, you return to take a farewell glimpse of America. On the contrary, they will be intensified. They will be penetrated by a sense of power unlike anything else the world has to offer—the power of immeasurable resources, still only in the infancy of their development, of inexhaustible national wealth, of a dynamic energy that numbs the mind, of a people infinitely diverse, yet curiously one—one in a certain fierce youthfulness of outlook, as of a people in the confident prime of their morning and with all the tasks and possibilities of the day before them. In the presence of this tumultuous life, with its crudeness and freshness* and violence, one looks back to Europe as to something avuncular and elderly, a mellowed figure of the late afternoon, a little tired and more than a little disillusioned and battered by the journey. For him the light has left the morning hills, but here it still clothes those hills with hope and spurs on to adventure.

That strong man who meets you on the brink of

Manhattan Rock and tosses his towers to the skies is no idle boaster. He has, in his own phrase, "the goods." He holds the world in fee. What he intends to do with his power is not very clear, even to himself. He started out, under the inspiration of a great prophet, to rescue Europe and the world from the tyranny of militarism, but the infamies of European statesmanship and the squalid animosities of his own household have combined to chill the chivalrous purpose. In his perplexity he has fallen a victim to reaction at home. He is filled with panic. He sees Bolshevism behind every bush, and a revolutionist in every one who does not keep in step. Americanism has shrunk from a creed of world deliverance to a creed of American interests, and the "100 per cent American" in every disguise of designing self-advertisement is preaching a holy war against everything that is significant and inspiring in the story of America. It is not a moment when the statue of Liberty, on her pedestal out there in the harbour, can feel very happy. Her occupation has gone. Her torch is no longer lit to invite the oppressed and the adventurer from afar. On the contrary, she turns her back on America and warns the alien away. Her torch has become a policeman's baton.

And as, in the afternoon of another day, brilliant, and crisp with the breath of winter, you thread your way once more through the populous waters of the noble harbour and make for the open sea, you look back upon the receding shore and the range of mighty battlements. The sun floods the land you are leaving with light. At this gateway he is near his setting, but

at the far gateway of the Pacific he is still in his morning prime, so vast is the realm he traverses. The mountain range of your first impression is caught in the glow of evening, and the proud pinnacle that looked to the untutored eye like the Matterhorn or the temple of primeval gods points its delicate traceries to the skies. And as you gaze you are conscious of a great note of interrogation taking shape in the mind. Is that cathedral of St. Woolworth the authentic expression of the soul of America, or has this mighty power you are leaving another gospel for mankind? And as the light fades and battlements and pinnacle merge into the encompassing dark there sounds in the mind the echoes of an immortal voice: "Let us here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth!"

And with that resounding music echoing in the mirid you bid farewell to America, confident that, whatever its failures, the great spirit of Lincoln will outlive and outsoar the pinnacle of St. Woolworth.

ON TAMING THE BEAR

A WOMAN, sitting behind me on the top of a bus, was explaining to her companion how *to* manage husbands. She was a strong-minded person and very confident on the subject. She had been married fifteen years, she said, and was satisfied that what

she had to learn about taming the bear was not worth learning. As far as I could gather her main thesis was that you must not make too much of the bear. We (I speak as one of the husbands under the scalpel of this formidable woman) must not be encouraged to think that we were little tin gods. We must not be allowed to get the idea that our wives were not independent of us. That was fatal. The more a woman showed that she could paddle her own canoe the more humble and manageable we became.

I gathered, too, that we had to be humoured and even humbugged. We were rather like unruly children who needed to have a lollipop stuffed in our mouths occasionally to keep us quiet and in good humour. It was quite easy to fool us. Only that morning her husband wanted to get up to breakfast. "No," said she, "you stay and have your breakfast comfortably in bed." And he did. "I didn't want him downstairs getting in the way and keeping me talking about this, that and the other. I like to have my breakfast in peace."

As she rattled on I seemed to see the whole tribe of husbands drooping abjectly before her withering exposure. Things which had been mercifully hidden from me became suddenly clear. That habit of breakfasting in bed, for example. It was an old habit with me, a relic of other days, when I went to bed as the dawn was breaking and the birds were tuning up for a new day. I had continued it with grave twinges of conscience long after the excuse for it had ceased to exist. I had felt it was an inexcusable laziness. I had determined for years to break it. Some day, I

had said to myself, I will stop this hedonist self-indulgence. I will set the household an example. I will be up with the lark. I will give the family an agreeable shock. I pictured the delight with which they would hail my astonishing appearance on that never-to-be-forgotten day when I came down to breakfast.

Now the whole deceit was as plain as a pikestaff. Now I understood, thanks to that masterful voice behind me, why my feeble protests, periodically uttered, against having my breakfast in bed had been so kindly repulsed. "Oh no, stay where you are. It's no trouble." And I had stayed, listening to the chirping of the sparrows, reading my book, and taking my tea and toast in comfortable ease. And now I knew the humiliating truth. It was all a blind. I was not wanted—that was the plain English of it. I was given my breakfast in bed in order that I might be kept out of the way. It was not a beautiful act of affectionate thoughtfulness, but an artful policy, a method of getting rid of a domestic nuisance under the disguise of generous indulgence. I own my blood boiled. Never again, I said.

Meanwhile, the astounding revelation of the way in which the innocent tribe of husbands was chastened and disciplined proceeded. I learned how we were most effectually fleeced and cozened. You feed the brute first. If you want something particular, a new hat or a sealskin jacket, something that you would not get out of us while we were fierce and hungry, you raise the subject when we are well fed, when the hard lineaments of our august countenance relax

and the comforting juices of the body begin to spread a benign influence over our emotions. Then we fall. I learned, too, that in the philosophy of this terrific woman a little judicious jealousy was mixed with the diabolical potion with which we were beguiled. "Nothing wrong, of course, my dear, but it does them no harm to know that we are not enslaved, and that there are other fish in the sea beside themselves."

As I heard the disclosure of the net of intrigue with which we were enveloped I felt that something must be done about it. There must be an exposure. The plot must be shown up. The scales must be lifted from the eyes of the blind and credulous victims who sit passively while their doom is woven about them. But this was only the prelude. There must be a crusade. We must have a Husbands' Defence League, with a slogan, "Down with Delilah," and a banner, illuminated by exclusively masculine hands, bearing the portrait of our patron saint, the estimable John Knox, author of that famous and splendid treatise (which I have not yet read) entitled *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. That, said I, was the stuff to give them. Brave old John, the foe of Bloody Mary, hated of Elizabeth, the scourge of the Queen of Scots. Three queens, all of them women and all of them his enemies. Glorious old John!

Meanwhile there must be action at once. My eyes had been opened to the sinister meaning of breakfast in bed. I would deal with that forthwith. I would open my campaign without a moment's delay. Tomorrow morning I would certainly get up to breakfast.

I would not, of course, give the least hint of the enormous meaning of the act. I would simply get up, just as naturally and unostentatiously as if I were a regular getter-up. I would stroll down negligently, perhaps whistling a bar or two of some familiar air in an absent-minded way that would suggest that I had been doing this sort of thing all my life. If there were comments—as there would be—I would turn them aside with an artful jest. I would not disclose my hand. That would be fatal until I had got my Husbands¹ Defence League in motion. Then I would open my batteries like thunder. Then the Monstrous Regiment of Women would know the tremendous storm that is foreshadowed when I go down to breakfast to-morrow morning. . . . Grand old John! I shall read your treatise to-night (perhaps). I shall think of you to-morrow when I throw off the coverlet of the sluggard and begin the first skirmish of the campaign. I will not be unworthy of you, old John. There shall be heard in the land again the blast of your trumpet and fear shall invade the heart of Delilah.

AN OLD ENGLISH TOWN

IT was a wish of Seneca's that the wise and virtuous when they slept could lend their thoughts and their feelings out to less wise and less virtuous people. It would be equally admirable if we could occasionally let our spiritual selves take wing and go on holiday, leaving the body at home to carry on the routine business, receive callers, answer the telephone, pay

the bills, and so on. If it were possible for me to take such a holiday I should go to Tewkesbury, where the eighth centenary of the famous Norman church of that town is being celebrated. There was a time when I had no desire to go to Tewkesbury. It was one of the places I did not want to go to because I feared that seeing it would destroy the Tewkesbury of my fancy. No one would hesitate to go to a place like Birmingham or Glasgow, for their names awaken no emotions in the mind, and experience of them can shatter no pleasant images.

But Tewkesbury is a name to conjure with. It belongs to the poetry of things. It is entangled in history and comes with the pomp of trumpets and the echoes of far-off deeds. It has the tang of Shakespeare about it. Was it not with its name that that great star swam into our ken with the earliest of our remembered lines?

**. . . false, fleeting, perjured Clarence,
That stabbed me on the field by Tewkesbury.**

Observe, not "the field at Tewkesbury" or "of Tewkesbury," but "the field by Tewkesbury." A subtle difference, but enough to convince any one who has been to that field that Shakespeare wandered there in his young days, perhaps boating thither from Stratford some summer day with Ann Hathaway. Was it not Tewkesbury's mustard that Falstaff hurled at Poin— or was it Pistol? "His wits are as thick as Tewkesbury mustard," he said. I like to think that Falstaff stayed at the "Hop Pole" at Tewkesbury on that famous recruiting journey into Gloucestershire,

when he ate a pippin in Squire Shallow's orchard, and that it was the mustard he got there that made his eyes water and stuck in his memory. It was certainly at the "Hop Pole" that Mr. Pickwick stopped for dinner on his journey from Bath. That is the last time, I think, that anything important happened at Tewkesbury. Since then it has slept, and one liked to think it was sleeping in a beautiful medieval dream, undisturbed by anything more modern than an occasional stage-coach or the horn of the red-coated huntsman clattering through the street.

That was how I liked to think of Tewkesbury, and I stayed away from it, lest I should find it was all cinemas, fried-fish shops and tin tabernacles. But one day last summer I was journeying by road from Wales and found Tewkesbury in my path, and that it was convenient to stay like Mr. Pickwick at the "Hop Pole." And now I know that Tewkesbury is as good as its name, and that I can go there and see as perfect a bit of old England as can be seen from the Tarhar to the Tweed. Of course, a city like York will* give you infinitely more, layer on layer of history written on its stones, telling of the England of the Britons, of the Romans, the Saxons, the Normans, and so onward.

But these are remains—the splendid litter of the centuries. The wonderful thing about Tewkesbury is that it is a living whole, a single town of Tudor England left apparently almost untouched—certainly unspoiled. Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century timbered houses, with their upper floors overhanging the pavements, line the three broad compact streets, and

between these reverend buildings little doorways admit to multitudinous courts where the poor live. I dare say it oughtn't to be so. I dare say the courts ought to be swept away and the people housed with gardens far afield. But at this moment I am not a social enthusiast, but a lover of the picturesque, and no doubt it is this compact structure of the place that has kept it so perfect a survival of the past. By the gardens and the courts flows Shakespeare's Avon, and just beyond the town it joins the broad flood of the Severn near the Bloody Field where the Wars of the Roses ended—a place of rank grass, left, I was told, untouched since that day of slaughter, nearly half a thousand years ago. "They're afeard o' what they might find," said the old man who directed me. And over all is the great Abbey Church, next to Durham Cathedral perhaps the finest piece of Norman ecclesiastical architecture in England. Thither from the Bloody Field on that day of battle long ago were borne the corpses of the two rivals, and there their bones lie side by side, preaching, for those who care to hear, more potent sermons on the fitful fever of life than ever came from the pulpit.

And this beautiful town is set in a landscape as gracious as "a melody that's sweetly played in tune"—a wide, rich vale, the most fertile part of England. The sun comes up over the Cotswolds in the morning, and sets over the great range of the Malverns in the evening. Between these two sheltering ramparts Tewkesbury lies, dreaming of the Middle Ages. I dare say it has its worries like any other place. But I refuse to be a realist about Tewkesbury. I will

AN OLD ENGLISH TOWN

indulge my love of romance. I will remember only that as I came away from the "Hop Pole" a vehicle with four jolly-looking fellows inside came up tooting a horn that played old-fashioned airs, and bringing in its train a swarm of boys. And as the boys gathered round the car one of the jolly-looking fellows put his hand in his pocket and drew out a heap of coins that he scattered among them. It was in the true spirit of the place. I fancy Mr. Pickwick did the same thing when he left the "Hop Pole," and I am sure that Falstaff did—in spite of the mustard. I would have done the same thing myself, if I had had the courage and the coppers. The next time I go to Tewkesbury I will fill my pockets with coppers.

ON A HANSOM CAB

I SAW a surprising spectacle in Regent Street last evening. It was a hansom cab. Not a derelict hansom cab such as you may still occasionally see, with an obsolete horse in the shafts and an obsolete driver on the box, crawling along like a haggard dream, or a forlorn spectre that has escaped from a cemetery and has given up hope of ever finding its way back—no, but a lively, spick-and-span hansom cab, with a horse trotting in the shafts and tossing its head as though it were full of beans and importance, and a slap-up driver on the box, looking as happy as a sandboy as he flicked and flourished his whip, and, still more astonishing, a real passenger, a lady, inside the vehicle.

I felt like taking my hat off to the lady and giving a cheer to the driver, for the apparition was curiously pleasing. It had something of the poignancy of a forgotten odour or taste that summons up whole vistas of the past—sweetbrier or mignonette or the austere flavour of the quince. In that trotting nag and the swaying figure on the box there flashed upon me the old London that used to amble along on four legs, the London before the Deluge, the London before the coming of King Petrol, when the hansom was the jaunty aristocrat of the streets, and the two-horse bus was the chariot of democracy. London was a slow place then, of course, and a journey, say, from Dollis Hill to Dulwich, was a formidable adventure, but it was very human and humorous. When you took your seat behind, or still better, beside the rosy-cheeked bus-driver, you settled down to a really good time. The world was in no hurry and the bus-driver was excellent company. He would tell you about the sins of that "orf horse," the idiosyncrasies of passengers, the artifices of the police, the mysteries of the stable. He would shout some abstruse joke to a passing driver, and with a hard wink include you in the revelry. The conductor would stroll up to him and continue a conversation that had begun early in the morning and seemed to go on intermittently all day—a conversation of that jolly sort in which, as Washington Irving says, the jokes are rather small and the laughter abundant.

In those happy days, of course, women knew their place. It was inside the bus. The outside was consecrated to that superior animal, Man. It was an act

of courage, almost of impropriety, for a woman to ride on the top alone. Anything might happen to her in those giddy moral altitudes. And even the lady I saw in the hansom last night would not have been quite above suspicion of being no better than she ought to be. The hansom was a rather roguish, rakish contraption that was hardly the thing for a lady to be seen in without a stout escort. It suggested romance, mysteries, elopements, late suppers, and all sorts of wickedness. A staid, respectable "growler" was much more fitting for so delicate an exotic as Woman. If she began riding in hansoms alone anything might happen. She might want to go to public dinners next—think of it!—she might be wanting to ride a bicycle—horrors!—she might discover a shameless taste for cigarettes, or demand a living wage, or University degrees, or a vote, just for all the world as though she was the equal of Man, the Magnificent. . . .

As I watched this straggler from the past bowling so gaily and challengingly through the realm that he had lost, my mind went back to the coming of King Petrol, whose advent heralded a new age. How clumsy and impossible he seemed then! He was a very Polyphemus of fable, mighty, but blind and blundering. He floundered along the streets, reeling from right to left like a drunken giant, encountering the kerbstone, skimming the lamp-post. He was in a perpetual state of boorish revolt, standing obstinately and mulishly in the middle of the street or across the street amidst the derision and rejoicing of those whose empire he threatened, and who saw in

these pranks the assurance of his ultimate failure. Memory went back to the old One a.m. from the Law Courts, and to one night that sums up for me the spirit of those days of the great transition. . . .

It was a jocose beast that, with snortings and trumpetings, used to start from the vicinity of the Law Courts at One a.m. The fellow knew his power. He knew that he was the last thing on wheels to skid along the Edgware Road. He knew that he had journalists aboard, worthless men who wrote him down in the newspapers, unmoral men who wrote articles

(from Our Peking Correspondent)

in Fleet Street, and then went home to bed with a quiet conscience; chauffeurs from other routes returning home, who when the car was "full up" hung on by teeth and toe-nails to the rails, or hilariously crowded in with the driver; barmaids and potboys loudly jocular, cabmen — yes, cabmen, upon my honour, cabmen in motor buses! You might see them in the One a.m. from the Law Courts any morning, red faced and genial as only cabmen can be, flinging fine old jokes at each other from end to end of the car, passing the snuff-box, making innocent merriment out of the tipsy gentleman with the tall hat who has said he wants to get out at Baker Street, and who, lurching in his sleep from right to left, is being swept on through Maida Vale to far Cricklewood. What winks are exchanged, what jokes cracked, what light-

hearted raillery! And when the top hat, under the impetus of a bigger lurch than usual, rolls to the floor—oh, then the car resounds with Homeric laughter, and the tipsy gentleman opens his dull eyes and looks vacantly around. But these revels soon are ended.

An ominous grunt breaks in upon the hilarity inside the car:

**First a shiver, and then a thrill,
Then something decidedly like a spill—**

and we are left sitting motionless in the middle of Edgware Road, with the clock over the shuttered shop opposite pointing to quarter to two.

It is the spirit of Jest inside the breast of the motor bus asserting himself. He disapproves of the passengers having all the fun. Is he not a humorist too? May he not be merry in the dawn of this May morning?

We take our fate like Englishmen, bravely, even merrily.

The cabmen laugh recklessly. This is their moment. This is worth living for. Their enemy is revealed in his true colours, a base betrayer of the innocent wayfarer; their profession is justified. What though it is two or three miles to Cricklewood, what though it is two in the morning! Who cares?

Only the gentleman with the big bag in the corner.

"Ow am I to git 'ome to Cricklewood?" he asks the conductor with tears in his voice.

The conductor gives it up. He goes round to help the driver. They busy themselves in the bowels of the machinery, they turn handles, they work pumps, they probe here and thump there.

They come out perspiring but merry. It 's all in the day's work. They have the cheerful philosophy of people who meddle with things that move—cab-drivers, bus-drivers, engine-drivers.

**Will, when looking well won't move thee,
Looking ill prevail?**

So they take a breather, light cigarettes, crack jokes. Then to it again.

Meanwhile all the hansoms in nocturnal London seem to swoop down on us, like sharks upon the dead whale. Up they rattle from this side and that, and every cabman flings a jibe as he passes.

"Look 'ere," says one, pulling up. "Why don't yer take the genelman where they want to go? That's what I asks yer. Why—don't—yer—take—the—genelman—where—they—want—to go? It's only your kid. Yer don't want to go. That's what it is. Yer don't want to go."

For the cabman is like "the wise thrush who sings his song twice over."

"'Ere, take ole Jumbo to the 'orspital!" cries another.

"We can't 'elp larfin', yer know," says a third feelingly.

"Well, you keep on larfin'," says the chauffeur, looking up from the inside of One a.m. "It suits your style o' beauty."

A mellow voice breaks out:

**"We won't go home till morning,
Till daylight does appear."**

And the refrain is taken up by half a dozen cabmen

in comic chorus. Those who can't sing, whistle, and those who can neither sing nor whistle, croak.

We sit inside patiently. We even joke too. All but the man with the big bag. He sits eyeing the bag as if it were his life-long enemy.

He appeals again to the conductor, who laughs.

The tipsy man with the tall hat staggers outside. He comes back, puts his head in the doorway, beams upon the passengers, and says:

"It's due out at eight-thirty in the mor-r-ning."

We think better of the tipsy gentleman in the tall hat. His speech is that of the politest people on earth. His good humour goes to the heart. He is like Dick Steele—"when he was sober he was delightful; when he was drunk he was irresistible."

"She won't go any more to-night," says the conductor.

We bow to the decree and silently steal away. All but the man with the big bag. We leave him still struggling with a problem that looks insoluble.

Two of us jump into a hansom that still prowls around, the last of the shoal of sharks.

"Drive up West End Lane."

"Right, sir."

Presently the lid opens. We look up. Cabby's face, wreathed in smiles, beams down on us.

"I see what was coming all the way from Baker Street," he says. "I see the petrol was on fire."

"Ah!"

"Yus," he says. "Thought I should pick you up about 'ere."

"Ah!"

"No good, motors," he goes on, cheerfully. "My opinion is they 'll go out as fast as they come in. Why, I hear lots o' the aristocracy are giving 'em up and goin' back to 'orses."

"Hope they 'll *get* better horses than this," for we are crawling painfully up the tortuous reaches of West End Lane.

"Well, genelmen, it ain't because 'e 's overworked. 'E ain't earned more than three bob to-night. That's jest what 'e 's earned. Three bob. It's the cold weather, you know. That's what it is. It's the cold weather as makes 'im duck his 'ead. Else 'e 's a good 'orse. And 'e does go after all, even if 'e only goes slow. And that's what you can't say of that there motor bus."

We had no reply to this thrust, and the lid dropped down with a sound of quiet triumph.

And so home. And my dreams that night were filled with visions of a huge Monster, reeking with strange odours, issuing hoarse sounds of malicious laughter and standing for ever and ever in the middle of Edgware Road with the clock opposite pointing to a quarter to two, a rueful face in the corner staring fixedly at a big bag, and a tipsy gentleman in a tall hat finding his way back to Baker Street in happy converse with a policeman.

Gone is the old London over which the shade of Mr. Hansom presided like a king. Gone is the "orf horse" with all its sins; gone is the rosy-cheeked driver with his merry jokes and his eloquent whip

and his tales of the streets; gone is the conductor who, as he gave you your ticket, talked to you in a spirit of leisurely comradeship about the weather, the Boat Race, or the latest clue to the latest mystery. We amble no more. We have banished laughter and leisure from the streets, and the face of the motor-bus driver, fixed and intense, is the symbol of the change. We have passed into a breathless world, a world of wonderful mechanical contrivances that have quickened the *tempo* of life and will soon have made the horse as much a memory as the bow and arrow or the wherry that used to be the principal vehicle of Elizabethan London. As I watched the hansom bowling along Regent Street until it was lost in the swirl of motor buses and taxis I seemed to see in it the last straggler of an epoch passing away into oblivion. I am glad it went so gallantly, and I am half sorry I did not give the driver a parting cheer as he flicked his whip in the face of the night.

THE GOLDEN AGE

I SEE that Dean Inge has been lamenting that he did not live a couple of generations ago. He seems to think that the world was a much more desirable place then, that it has been going to the dogs ever since, and that the only comfortable thought that we can cultivate in this degenerate time is that we shall soon be out of it. Assuming for the moment that the world was a happier place fifty or sixty years ago, I doubt whether it follows that the Dean would

have been happier in it than he is in our world to-day. The measure of personal happiness is fortunately not dependent on external circumstances. It is affected by them, of course. Most of us are more agreeable people when we have dined than when we are hungry, when we have slept well than when we have not slept at all, when our horse or our party has won than when it has lost, when things go right than when things go wrong. No philosophy is an anodyne for the tooth-ache, and the east wind plays havoc with the feelings of the best of us. In these and a thousand other ways we are the sport of circumstance, but in this respect we are no better and no worse off than our forbears fifty years ago or five hundred years ago, or than our descendants will be fifty or five hundred years hence.

But our essential happiness or unhappiness is independent of these things. It is a quality of character. It may have a physical basis. Our happiness, said the French lady to Boswell, depends upon the circulation of the blood. It may equally depend on our nervous constitution or the functioning of our organs. I cannot doubt that the Carlyles would have been happier people if they had had better digestions. They lived in that period which is held up to us as the time when it was good to be alive, but it is doubtful whether two more miserable people than they were are to be found on earth to-day, and Carlyle himself damned his own time even more bitterly than the Dean damns this. He would have damned any time in which he had the misfortune to live, for life would always have been a sorrowful

affair to him. It was his habit of mind. And the world for each of us is what the mind makes it.

**The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.**

In short, whether life is a comedy or a tragedy or just a humdrum affair that cannot be called either, does not depend upon the time in which we happen to live, for it is all these things at all times. It depends upon our point of view. I fancy Little Tich would have found the world as amusing as a country fair if he had lived in the Rome of Caligula, and I am sure that Carlyle would have found it as sad as a funeral if he had lived in the Garden of Eden. There is no question of merit or virtue in the matter. If there is, it is not the meritorious or the virtuous who are usually the most happy. It is they who take life lightly and indifferently who *get* the most fun out of it. I doubt whether there was ever a more odious monster on earth than Sulla, whose savageries and debaucheries made him not so much a man as a satyr. Yet, except for the hideous disease from which he died, there can hardly ever have been a more fortunate man or one who found the world, in a gross sense, a more amusing place. Even when his corpse was burned with the accustomed solemnities, the wind blew and the rain fell in perfect time and sequence, "so that," as Plutarch says, "his good fortune was firm even to the last, and did as it were officiate at his funeral." Dean Swift cursed the day he was born, though he lived in the relatively comfortable time of Queen Anne, and being the man he was, he would have cursed the

day he was born no matter what period of history he had lived in. He carried an unhappy world in the terrific gloom of his own mind.

Indeed, if we want to play with the idea of how we might have been happy, it is not the thought of living in other times that will satisfy us, but the thought of living other men's lives. If I had the privilege of ante-dating my birth, I would not bother about the period, but would choose very carefully my personality. Among the ancients I should select to be Herodotus, whose immortal work is saturated with the sunshine of as delighted a spirit as ever walked the earth. And among the moderns I would choose with equal confidence to live the life of Macaulay. It is true that he wept very copiously. I have amused myself sometimes in reading his *Life*, by collating the occasions on which he was in tears. He could have said with Michelet, "Le don que Saint Louis demande et n'obtient pas, je Feus, 'le don des larmes.'" Novels and poetry were bedewed with his tears. He wept whenever he was reminded of the sister he had lost, when he visited his old home in Bloomsbury, when he said "Hail!" and when he said "Farewell!" when friends fell away, and when foes, like Peel, passed into silence. But, in spite of his overcharged affection, what a rich, full, joyous life it was! What zest, what kindliness, what noble feeling, what fine living! I put Macaulay lower in the scale of literature than I once did, but in the scale of humanity there is none higher.

There never was a golden age in which happiness was the universal portion, nor one in which it was

denied to those who had the gift within. It is a personal affair, not an affair of time, place, or condition, and if we are sad, it is idle to lament that we were not born in days when we could have been merry. Sancho Panza is happy in any age, and Don Quixote is always sorrowful.

ON TAKING A HOLIDAY

I HOPE the two ladies from the country who have been writing to the newspapers to know what sights they ought to see in London during their Easter holiday will have a nice time. I hope they will enjoy the tube and have fine weather for the Monument, and whisper to each other successfully in the whispering gallery of St. Paul's, and see the dungeons at the Tower and the seats of the mighty at Westminster, and return home with a harvest of joyful memories. But I can promise them that there is one sight they will not see. They will not see me. Their idea of a holiday is London. My idea of a holiday is forgetting there is such a place as London.

Not that I dislike London. I should like to see it. I have long promised myself that I would see it. Some day, I have said, I will surely have a look at this place. It is a shame, I have said, to have lived in it so long and never to have seen it. I suppose I am not much worse than other Londoners. Do you, sir, who have been taking the morning bus from Balham for heaven knows how many years—do you, when you are walking down Fleet Street, stand still

with a shock of delight as the dome of St. Paul's and its cross of gold burst on your astonished sight? Do you go on a fine afternoon and take your stand on Waterloo Bridge to see that wondrous river facade that stretches with its cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces from Westminster to St. Paul's? Do you know the spot where Charles was executed, or the church where there are the best Grinling Gibbons carvings? Did you ever go into Somerset House to see the will of William Shakespeare, or—in short, did you ever see London? Did you ever see it, not with your eyes merely, but with your mind, with the sense of revelation, of surprise, of discovery? Did you ever see it as those two ladies from the country will see it this Easter as they pass breathlessly from wonder to wonder? Of course not. You need a holiday in London as I do. You need to set out with young Tom (aged ten) on a voyage of discovery and see all the sights of this astonishing city as though you had come to it from a far country.

That is how I hope to visit it—some day. But not this Easter, not when I know the beech woods are dressing themselves in green and the cherry blossoms are out in the orchards and the great blobs of the chestnut tree are ready to burst, and the cuckoo is calling all day long and the April meadows are "smooored wi' new grass," as they say in the Yorkshire dales. Not when I know that by putting down a bit of paper at the magic casement at Paddington I can be whisked between sunset and dawn to the fringe of Dartmoor and let loose—shall it be from Okehampton or Bovey Tracy or Moreton Hampstead?

what matter the gate by which we enter the sanctuary?—let loose, I say, into the vast spaces of earth and sky where the moorland streams sing their ancient runes over the boulders and the great tors stand out like castles of the gods against the horizon and the Easter sun dances, as the legend has it, overhead and founders gloriously in the night beyond Plymouth Sound.

Or, perhaps, ladies, if you come from the North, I may pass you unawares, and just about the time when you are cracking your breakfast *egg* in the boarding house at Russell Square—heavens, Russell Square!—and discussing whether you shall first go down the deepest lift or up the highest tower, or stand before the august ugliness of Buckingham Palace, or see the largest station or the smallest church, I shall be stepping out from Keswick, by the lapping waters of Derwentwater, hailing the old familiar mountains as they loom into sight, looking down again—think of it!—into the Jaws of Borrowdale, having a snack at Rosthwaite, and then, hey for Styhead! up, up over the rough mountain track, with the buzzard circling with slow flapping wings about the mountain flanks, with glorious Great Gable for my companion on the right hand and no less glorious Scafell for my companion on the left hand, and at the rocky turn in the track—lo! the great amphitheatre of Wasdale, the last sanctuary of lakeland.

And at this point, ladies, you may as you crane your neck to see the Duke of York at the top of his column—wondering all the while who the deuce the fellow was that he should stand so high—you may, I say,

if you like, conceive me standing at the top of the pass, taking my hat from my head and pronouncing a terrific curse on the vandals who would desecrate the last temple of solitude by driving a road over this fastness of the mountains in order that the gross tribe of motorists may come with their hoots and their odours, their hurry and vulgarity, and chase the spirit of the mountains away from us for ever. . . . And then by the screes of Great Gable to the hollow among the mountains. Or perchance, I may turn by Sprinkling Tarn and see the Pikes of Langdale come into view and stumble down Rossett Ghyll and so by the green pastures of Langdale to Grasmere.

In short, ladies, I may be found in many places. But I shall not tell you where. I am not quite sure that I could tell you where at this moment, for I am like a fellow who has come into great riches and is doubtful how he can squander them most gloriously. But, I repeat, ladies that you will not find me in London. I leave London to you. May you enjoy it.

