

# **The Ethics of Drink and Other Social Questions eBook**

## **The Ethics of Drink and Other Social Questions by James Runciman**

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# Page 1

## Produced by Steven Gibbs and PG Distributed Proofreaders

The ethics of drink and other social questions *OR JOINTS IN OUR SOCIAL ARMOUR*

*By James Runciman*

*Author of "A Dream of the North Sea," "Skippers and Shellbacks," Etc*

London

*Hodder and Stoughton*

*27, paternoster row*

*MDCCCXCII [1892]*

### *THE ETHICS OF THE DRINK QUESTION.*

All the statistics and formal statements published about drink are no doubt impressive enough to those who have the eye for that kind of thing; but, to most of us, the word "million" means nothing at all, and thus when we look at figures, and find that a terrific number of gallons are swallowed, and that an equally terrific amount in millions sterling is spent, we feel no emotion. It is as though you told us that a thousand Chinamen were killed yesterday; for we should think more about the ailments of a pet terrier than about the death of the Chinese, and we think absolutely nothing definite concerning the "millions" which appear with such an imposing intention when reformers want to stir the public. No man's imagination was ever vitally impressed by figures, and I am a little afraid that the statistical gentlemen repel people instead of attracting them. The persons who screech and abuse the drink sellers are even less effective than the men of figures; their opponents laugh at them, and their friends grow deaf and apathetic in the storm of whirling words, while cool outsiders think that we should be better employed if we found fault with ourselves and sat in sackcloth and ashes instead of gnashing teeth at tradesmen who obey a human instinct. The publican is considered, among platform folk in the temperance body, as even worse than a criminal, if we take all things seriously that they choose to say, and I have over and over again heard vague blather about confiscating the drink-sellers' property and reducing them to the state to which they have brought others. Then there is the rant regarding brewers. Why forget essential business only in order to attack a class of plutocrats whom we have made, and whom our society worships with odious grovellings? The brewers and distillers earn their money by concocting poisons which cause nearly all the crime and misery in broad Britain; there is not a soul living in these islands who does not know the effect of the afore-named poisons; there is not a soul living who does not very well know that there never was a pestilence crawling over the earth which could match the alcoholic poisons in murderous power. There is a demand for these poisons; the brewer and distiller supply the demand and gain thereby large profits; society beholds the profits

and adores the brewer. When a gentleman has sold enough alcoholic poison to give him the vast regulation fortune which is the drink-maker's



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inevitable portion, then the world receives him with welcome and reverence; the rulers of the nation search out honours and meekly bestow them upon him, for can he not command seats, and do not seats mean power, and does not power enable talkative gentry to feed themselves fat out of the parliamentary trough? No wonder the brewer is a personage. Honours which used to be reserved for men who did brave deeds, or thought brave thoughts, are reserved for persons who have done nothing but sell so many buckets of alcoholized fluid. Observe what happens when some brewer's wife chooses to spend L5000 on a ball. I remember one excellent lady carefully boasting (for the benefit of the Press) that the flowers alone that were in her house on one evening cost in all L2000. Well, the mob of society folk fairly yearn for invitations to such a show, and there is no meanness too despicable to be perpetrated by women who desire admission. So through life the drink-maker and his family fare in dignity and splendour; adulation surrounds them; powerful men bow to the superior force of money; wealth accumulates until the amount in the brewer's possession baffles the mind that tries to conceive it—and the big majority of our interesting race say that all this is good. Considering, then, how the English people directly and indirectly force the man of drink onward until he must of necessity fancy there is something of the moral demi-god about him; considering how he is wildly implored to aid in ruling us from Westminster; considering that his aid at an election may procure him the same honour which fell to the share of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham—may we not say that the community makes the brewer, and that if the brewer's stuff mars the community we have no business to howl at him. We are answerable for his living, and moving, and having his being—the few impulsive people who gird at him should rather turn in shame and try to make some impression on the huge, cringing, slavering crowd who make the plutocrat's pompous reign possible.

But for myself, I cannot be bothered with bare figures and vague abuse nowadays; abstractions are nothing, and neat arguments are less than nothing, because the dullest quack that ever quacked can always clench an argument in a fashion. Every turn that talk can take on the drink question brings the image of some man or woman, or company of men and women, before me, and that image is alive to my mind. If you pelt me with tabular forms, and tell me that each adult in Britain drank so many pints last year, you might just as well recite a mathematical proof. I fix on some one human figure that your words may suggest and the image of the bright lad whom I saw become a dirty, loafing, thievish sot is more instructive and more woeful than all your columns of numerals.



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Before me passes a tremendous procession of the lost: I can stop its march when I choose and fix on any given individual in the ranks, so that you can hardly name a single fact concerning drink, which does not recall to me a fellow-creature who has passed into the place of wrecked lives and slain souls. The more I think about it the more plainly I see that, if we are to make any useful fight against drink, we must drop the preachee-preachee; we must drop loud execrations of the people whose existence the State fosters; we must get hold of men who *know* what drinking means, and let them come heart to heart with the victims who are blindly tramping on to ruin for want of a guide and friend. My hideous procession of the damned is always there to importune me; I gathered the dolorous recruits who form the procession when I was dwelling in strange, darkened ways, and I know that only the magnetism of the human soul could ever have saved one of them. If anybody fancies that Gothenburg systems, or lectures, or little tiresome tracts, or sloppy yarns about "Joe Tomkins's Temperance Turkey," or effusive harangues by half-educated buffoons, will ever do any good, he must run along the ranks of my procession with me, and I reckon he may learn something. The comic personages who deal with the subject are cruelly useless; the very notion of making jokes in presence of such a mighty living Terror seems desolating to the mind; I could not joke over the pest of drink, for I had as lief dance a hornpipe to the blare of the last Trumpet.

I said you must have men who *know*, if you care to rescue any tempted creature. You must also have men who address the individual and get fast hold of his imagination; abstractions must be completely left alone, and your workers must know so much of the minute details of the horror against which they are fighting that each one who comes under their influence shall feel as if the story of his life were known and his soul laid bare. I do not believe that you will ever stop one man from drinking by means of legislation; you may level every tavern over twenty square miles, but you will not thereby prevent a fellow who has the *bite* of drink from boozing himself mad whenever he likes. As for stopping a woman by such merely mechanical means as the closing of public-houses, the idea is ridiculous to anybody who knows the foxy cunning, the fixed determination of a female soaker. It is a great moral and physical problem that we want to solve, and Bills and clauses are only so much ink and paper which are ineffective as a schoolboy's copybook. If a man has the desire for alcohol there is no power known that can stop him from gratifying himself; the end to be aimed at is to remove the desire—to get the drinker past that stage when the craving presses hardly on him, and you can never bring that about by rules and regulations. I grant that the clusters of drink-shops which are stuck together in the slums



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of our big towns are a disgrace to all of us, but if we closed 99 per cent. of them by Statute we should have the same drunken crew left. While wandering far and wide over England, nothing has struck me more than the steady resolution with which men will obtain drink during prohibited hours; the cleverest administrator in the world could not frame a network of clauses that could stop them; one might close every drink-selling place in Britain, and yet those folks that had a mind would get drink when they wanted it. You may ply bolts and bars; you may stop the working of beer-engines and taps; but all will be futile, for I repeat, that only by asserting power over hearts, souls, imaginations, can you make any sort of definite resistance to the awe-striking plague that envenoms the world. With every humility I am obliged to say that many of the good people who aim at reform do not know sufficiently well the central facts regarding drink and drinkers. It is beautiful to watch some placid man who stands up and talks gently to a gathering of sympathizers. The reposeful face, the reposeful voice, the refinement, the assured faith of the speaker are comforting; but when he explains that he has always been an abstainer, I am inclined to wonder how he can possibly exchange ideas with an alcoholized man. How *can* he know where to aim his persuasions with most effect? Can he really sympathize with the fallen? He has never lived with drunkards or wastrels; he is apart, like a star, and I half think that he only has a blurred vision of the things about which he talks so sweetly. He would be more poignant, and more likely to draw people after him, if he had living images burned into his consciousness. My own set of pictures all stand out with ghastly plainness as if they were lit up by streaks of fire from the Pit. I have come through the Valley of the Shadow into which I ventured with a light heart, and those who know me might point and say what was said of a giant: "There is the man who has been in hell." It was true. Through the dim and sordid inferno, I moved as in a trance for awhile, and that is what makes me so keen to warn those who fancy they are safe; that is what makes me so discontented with the peculiar ethical conceptions of a society which bows down before the concocter of drink and spurns the lost one whom drink seizes. I have learned to look with yearning pity and pardon on all who have been blasted in life by their own weakness, and gripped by the trap into which so many weakly creatures stumble. Looking at brutal life, catching the rotting soul in the very fact, have made me feel the most careless contempt for Statute-mongers, because I know now that you must conquer the evil of evils by a straight appeal to one individual after another and not by any screed of throttling jargon. One Father Mathew would be worth ten Parliaments, even if the Parliaments were all reeling off curative measures with unexampled velocity. You must not talk to a county or a



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province and expect to be heard to any purpose; you must address John, and Tom, and Mary. I am sure that dead-lift individual effort will eventually reduce the ills arising from alcohol to a minimum, and I am equally sure that the blind groping of half-informed men who chatter at St. Stephen's will never do more good than the chatter of the same number of jackdaws. It is impossible to help admiring Sir Wilfrid Lawson's smiling courage, but I really do not believe that he sees more than the faint shadows of the evils against which he struggles; he does not know the true nature of the task which he has attacked, and he fancies that securing temperance is an affair of bolts, and bars, and police, and cackling local councils. I wish he had lived with me for a year.

If you talk with strong emotion about the dark horror of drink you always earn plenty of jibes, and it is true that you do give your hand away, as the fighting men say. It is easy to turn off a light paragraph like this: "Because A chooses to make a beast of himself, is that any reason why B, and C, and D should be deprived of a wholesome article of liquid food?"—and so on. Now, I do not want to trouble B, and C, and D at all; A is my man, and I want to get at him, not by means of a policeman, or a municipal officer of any kind, but by bringing my soul and sympathy close to him. Moreover, I believe that if everybody had definite knowledge of the wide ruin which is being wrought by drink there would be a general movement which would end in the gradual disappearance of drinking habits. At this present, however, our state is truly awful, and I see a bad end to it all, and a very bad end to England herself, unless a great emotional impulse travels over the country. The same middle class which is envenomed by the gambling madness is also the heir of all the more vile habits which the aristocrats have abandoned. Drinking—conviviality I think they call it—is not merely an excrescence on the life of the middle class—it *is* the life; and work, thought, study, seemly conduct, are now the excrescences. Drink first, gambling second, lubricity third—those are the chief interests of the young men, and I cannot say that the interests of mature and elderly men differ very much from those of the fledglings. Ladies and gentlemen who dwell in quiet refinement can hardly know the scenes amid which our middle-class lad passes the span of his most impressionable days. I have watched the men at all times and in all kinds of places; every town of importance is very well known to me, and the same abomination is steadily destroying the higher life in all. The Chancellors of the Exchequer gaily repeat the significant figures which give the revenue from alcohol; the optimist says that times are mending; the comfortable gentry who mount the pulpits do not generally care to ruffle the fine dames by talking about unpleasant things—and all the while the curse is gaining, and the betting, scoffing,



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degraded crew of drinkers are sliding merrily to destruction. Some are able to keep on the slide longer than others, but I have seen scores—hundreds—stop miserably, and the very faces of the condemned men, with the last embruted look on them, are before me. My subject has so many thousands of facets that I am compelled to select a few of the most striking. Take one scene through which I sat not very long ago, and then you may understand how far the coming regenerator will have to go. A great room was filled by about 350 men and lads, all of the middle class; a concert was going on, and I was a little curious to know the kind of entertainment which the well-dressed company liked. Of course there was drink in plenty, and the staff of waiters had a busy time; a loud crash of talk went on between the songs, and, as the drink gathered power on excited brains, this crash grew more and more discordant. Nice lads, with smooth, pleasant faces, grew flushed and excited, and I am afraid that I occupied myself in marking out possible careers for a good many of them as I studied their faces. There was not much fun of the healthy kind; fat, comfortable, middle-aged men laughed so heartily at the faintest indecent allusion that the singers grew broader and broader, and the hateful music-hall songs grew more and more risky as the night grew onward. By the way, can anything be more loathsomely idiotic than the average music-hall ditty, with its refrain and its quaint stringing together of casual filthiness? If I had not wanted to fix a new picture on my mind I should have liked better to be in a tap-room among honestly brutal costers and scavengers than with that sniggering, winking gang. The drink got hold, glasses began to be broken here and there, the time was beaten with glass crushers, spoons, pipes, and walking-sticks; and then the bolder spirits felt that the time for good, rank, unblushing blackguardism had come. A being stepped up and faced a roaring audience of enthusiasts who knew the quality of his dirtiness; he launched out into an unclean stave, and he reduced his admirers to mere convulsions. He was encored, and he went a trifle further, until he reached a depth of bestiality below which a gaff in Shoreditch could not descend. Ah! Those bonny lads, how they roared with laughter, and how they exchanged winks with grinning elders! Not a single obscure allusion to filth was lost upon them, and they took more and more drink under pressure of the secret excitement until many of them were unsteady and incoherent. I think I should shoot a boy of mine if I found him enjoying such a foul entertainment. It was leze-Humanity. The orgie rattled on, to the joy of all the steaming, soddened company, and I am not able to guess where some of the songs and recitations came from. There are deeps below deeps, and I suppose that there are skilled literary workmen who have sunk so far that they are ready to supply the unspeakable dirt which I heard.

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There was a merry crowd at the bar when this astounding function ceased, and the lively lads jostled, and laughed, and quoted some of the more spicy specimens of nastiness which they had just heard.

Now, I should not have mentioned such an unsavoury business as this, but that it illustrates in a curious way the fact that one is met and countered by the power of Drink at every turn in this country. Among that unholy audience were one or two worthies who ought by rights to have called the police, and forced the promoters of the fun to appear before the Bench in the morning. But then these magistrates had an interest in Beer, and Brewery shares were pretty well represented in the odious room, and thus a flagrant scandal was gently passed aside. The worst of it is that, after a rouse like this, the young men do not care to go to bed, so they adjourn to some one's rooms and play cards till any hour. In the train next morning there are blotchy faces, dull eyes, tongues with a bitter taste, and there is a general rush for "liveners" before the men go to office or warehouse; and the day drags on until the joyous evening comes, when some new form of debauch drowns the memory of the morning's headache. Should you listen to a set of these men when the roar of a long bar is at its height at night, you will find that the life of the intellect has passed away from their midst. The fellows may be sharp in a small way at business, and I am sure I hope they are; but their conversation is painful in the extreme to any one who wishes to retain a shred of respect for his own species. If you listen long, and then fix your mind so that you can pick out the exact significance of what you have heard, you become confounded. Take the scraps of "bar" gabble. "So I says, 'Lay me fours.' And he winks and says, 'I'll give you seven to two, if you like.' Well, you know, the horse won, and I stood him a bottle out of the three pound ten, so I wasn't much in." "What!" says I; 'step outside along o' me, and bring your pal with you, and I'll spread your bloomin' nose over your face.'" "That corked him." "I tell you Flyaway's a dead cert. I know a bloke that goes to Newmarket regular, and he's acquainted with Reilly of the Greyhound, and Reilly told him that he heard Teddy Martin's cousin say that Flyaway was tried within seven pounds of Peacock. Can you have a better tip than that?" "I'll give you the break, and we'll play for a bob and the games." "Thanks, deah boy, I'll jest have one with you. Lor! wasn't I chippy this morning? I felt as if the pavement was making rushes at me, and my hat seemed to want a shoehorn to get it on or off for that matter. Bill's whisky's too good." "I'm going out with a Judy on Sunday, or else you'd have me with you. The girls won't leave me alone, and the blessed dears can't be denied." So the talk goes steadily forward. What can a bright lad learn there? Many of the assembly are very young, and their features have not lost the freshness and purity

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of skin which give such a charm to a healthy lad's appearance. Would any mother like to see her favourite among that hateful crowd? I do not think that mothers rightly know the sort of places which their darlings enter; I do not think they guess the kind of language which the youths hear when the chimes sound at midnight; they do not know the intricacies of a society which half encourages callow beings to drink, and then kicks them into the gutter if the drink takes hold effectually. The kindly, seemingly woman remains at home in her drawing-room, papa slumbers if he is one of the stay-at-home sort; but Gerald, and Sidney, and Alfred are out in the drink-shop hearing talk fit to make Rabelais turn queasy, or they are in the billiard-room learning to spell "ruin" with all convenient speed, or perhaps they have "copped it"—that is the correct phrase—rather early, and they are swaggering along, shadowed by some creature—half girl, half tiger-cat—who will bring them up in good time. If the women knew enough, I sometimes think they would make a combined, nightly raid on the boozing-bars, and bring their lads out.

Some hard-headed fellows may think that there is something grandmotherly in the regrets which I utter over the cesspool in which so many of our middle-class seem able to wallow without suffering asphyxia; but I am only mournful because I have seen the plight of so many and many after their dip in the sinister depths of the pool. I envy those stolid people who can talk so contemptuously of frailty—I mean I envy them their self-mastery; I quite understand the temperament of those who can be content with a slight exhilaration, and who fiercely condemn the crackbrain who does not know when to stop. No doubt it is a sad thing for a man to part with his self-control, but I happen to hold a brief for the crackbrain, and I say that there is not any man living who can afford to be too contemptuous, for no one knows when his turn may come to make a disastrous slip.

Most strange it is that a vice which brings instant punishment on him who harbours it should be first of all encouraged by the very people who are most merciless in condemning it. The drunkard has not to wait long for his punishment; it follows hard on his sin, and he is not left to the justice of another world. And yet, as we have said, this vice, which entails such scathing disgrace and suffering, is encouraged in many seductive ways. The talk in good company often runs on wine; the man who has the deadly taint in his blood is delicately pressed to take that which brings the taint once more into ill-omened activity; but, so long as his tissues show no sign of that flabbiness and general unwholesomeness which mark the excessive drinker, he is left unnoticed. Then the literary men nearly always make the subject of drink attractive in one way or other. We laugh at Mr. Pickwick and all his gay set of brandy-bibbers; we laugh at John Ridd, with his few odd gallons of ale per day;

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but let any man be seen often in the condition which led to Mr. Pickwick's little accident, and see what becomes of him. He is soon shunned like a scabbed sheep. One had better incur penal servitude than fall into that vice from which the Government derives a huge revenue—the vice which is ironically associated with friendliness, good temper, merriment, and all goodly things. There are times when one is minded to laugh for very bitterness.

And this sin, which begins in kindness and ends always in utter selfishness—this sin, which pours accursed money into the Exchequer—this sin, which consigns him who is guilty of it to a doom worse than servitude or death—this sin is to be fought by Act of Parliament! On the one hand, there are gentry who say, "Drink is a dreadful curse, but look at the revenue." On the other hand, there are those who say, "Drink is a dreadful thing; let us stamp it out by means of foolscap and printers' ink." Then the neutrals say, "Bother both your parties. Drink is a capital thing in its place. Why don't you leave it alone?" Meantime the flower of the earth are being bitterly blighted. It is the special examples that I like to bring out, so that the jolly lads who are tempted into such places as the concert-room which I described may perhaps receive a timely check. It is no use talking to me about culture, and refinement, and learning, and serious pursuits saving a man from the devouring fiend; for it happens that the fiend nearly always clutches the best and brightest and most promising. Intellect alone is not worth anything as a defensive means against alcohol, and I can convince anybody of that if he will go with me to a common lodging-house which we can choose at random. Yes, it is the bright and powerful intellects that catch the rot first in too many cases, and that is why I smile at the notion of mere book-learning making us any better. If I were to make out a list of the scholars whom I have met starving and in rags, I should make people gape. I once shared a pot of fourpenny ale with a man who used to earn £2000 a year by coaching at Oxford. He was in a low house near the Waterloo Road, and he died of cold and hunger there. He had been the friend and counsellor of statesmen, but the vice from which statesmen squeeze revenue had him by the throat before he knew where he was, and he drifted toward death in a kind of constant dream from which no one ever saw him wake. These once bright and splendid intellectual beings swarm in the houses of poverty: if you pick up with a peculiarly degraded one you may always be sure that he was one of the best men of his time, and it seems as if the very rich quality of his intelligence had enabled corruption to rankle through him so much the more quickly. I have seen a tramp on the road—a queer, long-nosed, short-sighted animal—who would read Greek with the book upside-down. He was a very fine Latin scholar, and we tried him with Virgil; he could go off at score when he had a single line



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given him, and he scarcely made a slip, for the poetry seemed ingrained. I have shared a pennyworth of sausage with the brother of a Chief Justice, and I have played a piccolo while an ex-incumbent performed a dance which he described, I think, as Pyrrhic. He fell in the fire and used hideous language in Latin and French, but I do not know whether that was Pyrrhic also. Drink is the dainty harvester; no puny ears for him, no faint and bending stalks: he reaps the rathe corn, and there is only the choicest of the choice in his sheaves. That is what I want to fix on the minds of young people—and others; the more sense of power you have, the more pride of strength you have, the more you are likely to be marked and shorn down by the grim reaper; and there is little hope for you when the reaper once approaches, because the very friends who followed the national craze, and upheld the harmlessness of drink, will shoot out their lips at you and run away when your bad moment comes.

The last person who ever suspects that a wife drinks is always the husband; the last person who ever suspects that any given man is bitten with drink is that man himself. So stealthily, so softly does the evil wind itself around a man's being, that he very often goes on fancying himself a rather admirable and temperate customer—until the crash comes. It is all so easy, that the deluded dupe never thinks that anything is far wrong until he finds that his friends are somehow beginning to fight shy of him. No one will tell him what ails him, and I may say that such a course would be quite useless, for the person warned would surely fly into a passion, declare himself insulted, and probably perform some mad trick while his nerves were on edge. Well, there comes a time when the doomed man is disinclined for exertion, and he knows that something is wrong. He has become sly almost without knowing it, and, although he is pining for some stimulus, he pretends to go without, and tries by the flimsiest of devices, to deceive those around him. Now that is a funny symptom; the master vice, the vice that is the pillar of the revenue, always, without any exception known to me, turns a man into a sneak, and it generally turns him into a liar as well. So sure as the habit of concealment sets in, so surely we may be certain that the dry-rot of the soul has begun. The drinker is tremulous; he finds that light beverages are useless to him, and he tries something that burns: his nerve recovers tone; he laughs at himself for his early morning fears, and he gets over another day. But the dry-rot is spreading; body and soul react on each other, and the forlorn one soon begins to be fatally false and weak in morals, and dirty and slovenly in person. Then in the dead, unhappy nights he suffers all the torments that can be endured if he wakes up while his day's supply of alcohol lies stagnant in his system. No imagination is so retrospective as the drunkard's, and the drunkard's



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remorse is the most terrible torture known. The wind cries in the dark and the trees moan; the agonized man who lies waiting the morning thinks of the times when the whistle of the wind was the gladdest of sounds to him; his old ambitions wake from their trance and come to gaze on him reproachfully; he sees that fortune (and mayhap fame) have passed him by, and all through his own fault; he may whine about imaginary wrongs during the day when he is maudlin, but the night fairly throttles him if he attempts to turn away from the stark truth, and he remains pinned face to face with his beautiful, dead self. Then, with a start, he remembers that he has no friends. When he crawls out in the morning to steady his hand he will be greeted with filthy public-house cordiality by the animals to whose level he has dragged himself, but of friends he has none. Now, is it not marvellous? Drink is so jolly; prosperous persons talk with such a droll wink about vagaries which they or their friends committed the night before; it is all so very, very lightsome! The brewers and distillers who put the mirth-inspiring beverages into the market receive more consideration, and a great deal more money, than an average European prince;—and yet the poor dry-rotted unfortunate whose decadence we are tracing is like a leper in the scattering effects which he produces during his shaky promenade. He is indeed alone in the world, and brandy or gin is his only counsellor and comforter. As to character, the last rag of that goes when the first sign of indolence is seen; the watchers have eyes like cats, and the self-restrained men among them have usually seen so many fellows depart to perdition that every stage in the process of degradation is known to them. No! there is not a friend, and dry, clever gentlemen say, “Yes. Good chap enough once on a day, but can’t afford to be seen with him now.” The soaker is amazed to find that women are afraid of him a little, and shrink from him—in fact, the only people who are cordial with him are the landlords, among whom he is treated as a sort of irresponsible baby. “I may as well have his money as anybody else. He shan’t get outrageously drunk here, but he may as well moisten his clay and keep himself from being miserable. If he gets the jumps in the night that’s his look-out.” That is the soaker’s friend. The man is not unkind; he is merely hardened, and his morals, like those of nearly all who are connected with the great Trade, have suffered a twist. When the soaker’s last penny has gone, he will receive from the landlord many a contemptuously good-natured gift—pity it is that the lost wastrel cannot be saved before that weariful last penny huddles in the corner of his pocket.

While the harrowing descent goes on our suffering wretch is gradually changing in appearance: the piggish element that is latent in most of us comes out in him; his morality is sapped; he will beg, borrow, lie, and steal; and, worst of all, he is a butt for thoughtless young fellows. The last is the worst cut of all, for the battered, bloodless, sunken ne’er-do-well can remember only too vividly his own gallant youth, and the thought of what he was drives him crazed.



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There is only one end; if the doomed one escapes *delirium tremens* he is likely to have cirrhosis, and if he misses both of these, then dropsy or Bright's disease claims him. Those who once loved him pray for his death, and greet his last breath with an echoing sigh of thankfulness and relief: he might have been cheered in his last hour by the graceful sympathy of troops of friends; but the State-protected vice has such a withering effect that it scorches up friendship as a fiery breath from a furnace might scorch a grass blade. If one of my joyous, delightful lads could just watch the shambling, dirty figure of such a failure as I have described; if he could see the sneers of amused passers-by, the timid glances of women, the contemptuous off-hand speech of the children—"Oh! him! That's old, boozy Blank;" then the youths might well tremble, for the woebegone beggar that snivels out thanks for a mouthful of gin was once a brave lad—clever, handsome, generous, the delight of friends, the joy of his parents, the most brilliantly promising of all his circle. He began by being jolly; he was well encouraged and abetted; he found that respectable men drank, and that Society made no demur. But he forgot that there are drinkers and drinkers, he forgot that the cool-headed men were not tainted by heredity, nor were their brains so delicately poised that the least grain of foreign matter introduced in the form of vapour could cause semi-insanity. And thus the sacrifice of Society—and the Exchequer—goes to the tomb amid contempt, and hissing, and scorn; while the saddest thing of all is that those who loved him most passionately are most glad to hear the clods thump on his coffin. I believe, if you let me keep a youngster for an hour in a room with me, I could tell him enough stories from my own shuddery experience to frighten him off drink for life. I should cause him to be haunted.

There is none of the rage of the convert in all this; I knew what I was doing when I went into the base and sordid homes of ruin during years, and I want to know how any justification *not* fitted for the libretto of an extravaganza can be given by certain parliamentary gentlemen in order that we may be satisfied with their conduct. My wanderings and freaks do not count; I was a Bohemian, with the tastes of a Romany and the curiosity of a philosopher; I went into the most abominable company because it amused me and I had only myself to please, and I saw what a fearfully tense grip the monster, Drink, has taken of this nation; and let me say that you cannot understand that one little bit, if you are content to knock about with a policeman and squint at signboards. Well, I want to know how these legislators can go to church and repeat certain prayers, while they continue to make profit by retailing Death at so much a gallon; and I want to know how some scores of other godly men go out of their way to back up a traffic which is very well able to take care of itself. A wild,

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night-roaming gipsy like me is not expected to be a model, but one might certainly expect better things from folks who are so insultingly, aggressively righteous. One sombre and thoughtful Romany of my acquaintance said, “My brother, there are many things that I try to fight, and they knock me out of time in the first round.” That is my own case exactly when I observe comfortable personages who deplore vice, and fill their pockets to bursting by shoving the vice right in the way of the folks most likely to be stricken with deadly precision by it.

It is not easy to be bad-tempered over this saddening business; one has to be pitiful. As my memory travels over England, and follows the tracks that I trod, I seem to see a line of dead faces, that start into life if I linger by them, and mop and mow at me in bitterness because I put out no saving hand. So many and many I saw tramping over the path of Destruction, and I do not think that ever I gave one of them a manly word of caution. It was not my place, I thought, and thus their bones are bleaching, and the memory of their names has flown away like a mephitic vapour that was better dispersed. Are there many like me, I wonder, who have not only done nothing to battle with the mightiest modern evil, but have half encouraged it through cynical recklessness and pessimism? We entrap the poor and the base and the wretched to their deaths, and then we cry out about their vicious tendencies, and their improvidence, and all the rest. Heaven knows I have no right to sermonize; but, at least, I never shammed anything. When I saw some spectacle of piercing misery caused by Drink (as nearly all English misery is) I simply choked down the tendency to groan, and grimly resolved to see all I could and remember it. But now that I have had time to reflect instead of gazing and moaning, I have a sharp conception of the thing that is biting at England's vitals. People fish out all sorts of wondrous and obscure causes for crime. As far as England is concerned I should lump the influences provocative of crime and productive of misery into one—I say Drink is the root of almost all evil. It is heartbreaking to know what is going on at our own doors, for, however we may shuffle and blink, we cannot disguise the fact that many millions of human beings who might be saved pass their lives in an obscene hell—and they live so in merry England. Durst any one describe a lane in Sandgate, Newcastle-on-Tyne, a court off Orange Street or Lancaster Street, London, an alley in Manchester, a four-storey tenement in the Irish quarter of Liverpool? I think not, and it is perhaps best that no description should be done; for, if it were well done it would make harmless people unhappy, and if it were ill done it would drive away sympathy. I only say that all the horrors of those places are due to alcohol alone. Do not say that idleness is answerable for the gruesome state of things; that would be putting cause for effect. A man



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finds the pains of the world too much for him; he takes alcohol to bring on forgetfulness; he forgets, and he pays for his pleasure by losing alike the desire and capacity for work. The man of the slums fares exactly like the gentleman: both sacrifice their moral sense, both become idle; the bad in both is ripened into rankness, and makes itself villainously manifest at all seasons; the good is atrophied, and finally dies. Goodness may take an unconscionable time a-dying, but it is sentenced to death by the fates from the moment when alcoholism sets in, and the execution is only a matter of time.

England, then, is a country of grief. I never yet knew one family which had not lost a cherished member through the national curse; and thus at all times we are like the wailing nation whereof the first-born in every house was stricken. It is an awful sight, and as I sit here alone I can send my mind over the sad England which I know, and see the army of the mourners. They say that the calling of the wounded on the field of Borodino was like the roar of the sea: on my battle-field, where drink has been the only slayer, there are many dead; and I can imagine that I hear the full volume of cries from those who are stricken but still living. The vision would unsettle my reason if I had not a trifle of Hope remaining. The philosophic individual who talks in correctly frigid phrases about the evils of the Liquor Trade may keep his reason balanced daintily and his nerve unhurt. But I have images for company—images of wild fearsomeness. There is the puffy and tawdry woman who rolls along the street goggling at the passengers with boiled eye. The little pretty child says, “Oh! mother, what a strange woman. I didn’t understand what she said.” My pretty, that was Drink, and you may be like that one of these days, for as little as your mother thinks it, if you ever let yourself touch the Curse carelessly. Bless you, I know scores who were once as sweet as you who can now drink any costermonger of them all under the stools in the Haymarket bar. The young men grin and wink as that staggering portent lurches past: I do not smile; my heart is too sad for even a show of sadness. Then there are the children—the children of Drink they should be called, for they suck it from the breast, and the venomous molecules become one with their flesh and blood, and they soon learn to like the poison as if it were pure mother’s milk. How they hunger—those little children! What obscure complications of agony they endure and how very dark their odd convulsive species of existence is made, only that one man may buy forgetfulness by the glass. If I let my imagination loose, I can hear the immense army of the young crying to the dumb and impotent sky, and they all cry for bread. Mercy! how the little children suffer! And I have seen them by the hundred—by the thousand—and only helped from caprice; I could do no other. The iron winter is nearing us, and soon the dull agony of cold will swoop down

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and bear the gnawing hunger company while the two dire agencies inflict torture on the little ones. Were it not for Drink the sufferers might be clad and nourished; but then Drink is the support of the State, and a few thousand of raw-skinned, hunger-bitten children perhaps do not matter. Then I can see all the ruined gentlemen, and all the fine fellows whose glittering promise was so easily tarnished; they have crossed my track, and I remember every one of them, but I never could haul back one from the fate toward which he shambled so blindly; what could I do when Drink was driving him? If I could not shake off the memories of squalor, hunger, poverty—well-deserved poverty—despair, crime, abject wretchedness, then life could not be borne. I can always call to mind the wrung hands and drawn faces of well-nurtured and sweet ladies who saw the dull mask of loathsome degradation sliding downward over their loved one's face. Of all the mental trials that are cruel, that must be the worst—to see the light of a beloved soul guttering gradually down into stench and uncleanness. The woman sees the decadence day by day, while the blinded and lulled man who causes all the indescribable trouble thinks that everything is as it should be. The Drink mask is a very scaring thing; once you watch it being slowly fitted on to a beautiful and spiritual face you do not care over-much about the revenue.

And now the famous Russian's question comes up: What shall we do? Well, so far as the wastrel poor are concerned, I should say, "Catch them when young, and send them out of England so long as there is any place abroad where their labour is sought." I should say so, because there is not a shadow of a chance for them in this country: they will go in their turn to drink as surely as they go to death. As to the vagabond poor whom we have with us now I have no hope for them; we must wait until death weeds them out, for we can do nothing with them nor for them.

Among the classes who are better off from the worldly point of view, we shall have sacrifices offered to the fiend from time to time. Drink has wound like some ubiquitous fungus round and round the tissues of the national body, and we are sure to have a nasty growth striking out at intervals. It tears the heart-strings when we see the brave, the brilliant, the merry, the wise, sinking under the evil clement in our appalling dual nature, and we feel, with something like despair, that we cannot be altogether delivered from the scourge yet awhile. I have stabs of conscience when I call to mind all I have seen and remember how little I have done, and I can only hope, in a shame-faced way, that the use of intoxicants may be quietly dropped, just as the practice of gambling, and the habit of drinking heavy, sweet wines, have passed away from the exclusive society in which cards used to form the main diversion. Frankly speaking, I have seen the degradation, the abomination, and the measureless force of Drink so near at hand that

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I am not sanguine. I can take care of myself, but I am never really sure about many other people, and I had good reason for not being sure of myself. One thing is certain, and that is that the creeping enemy is sure to attack the very last man or woman whom you would expect to see attacked. When the first symptoms are seen, the stricken one should be delivered from *ennui* as much as possible, and then some friend should tell, in dull, dry style, the slow horror of the drop to the Pit. Fear will be effective when nothing else will. Many are stronger than I am and can help more. By the memory of broken hearts, by the fruitless prayers of mothers and sorrowing wives, for the sake of the children who are forced to stay on earth in a living death, I ask the strong to help us all. Blighted lives, wrecked intellects, wasted brilliancy, poisoned morality, rotted will—all these mark the road that the King of Evils takes in his darksome progress. Out of the depths I have called for aid and received it, and now I ask aid for others, and I shall not be denied.

*October, 1889.*

### VOYAGING AT SEA

A philosopher has described the active life of man as a continuous effort to forget the facts of his own existence. It is vain to pin such philosophers to a definite meaning; but I think the writer meant vaguely to hint in a lofty way that the human mind incessantly longs for change. We all crave to be something that we are not; we all wish to know the facts concerning states of existence other than our own; and it is this craving curiosity that produces every form of social and spiritual activity. Yet, with all this restless desire, this uneasy yearning, only a few of us are ever able to pass beyond one piteously narrow sphere, and we rest in blank ignorance of the existence that goes on without the bounds of our tiny domain. How many people know that by simply going on board a ship and sailing for a couple of days they would pass practically into another moral world, and change their mental as well as their bodily habits? I have been moved to these reflections by observing the vast amount of nautical literature which appears during the holiday season, and by seeing the complete ignorance and misconception which are palmed off upon the public. It is a fact that only a few English people know anything about the mightiest of God's works. To them life on the ocean is represented by a series of phrases which seem to have been transplanted from copy-books. They speak of "the bounding main," "the raging billows," "seas mountains high," "the breath of the gale," "the seething breakers," and so on; but regarding the commonplace, quiet everyday life at sea they know nothing. Strangely enough, only Mr. Clark Russell has attempted to give in literary form a vivid, veracious account of sea-life, and his thrice-noble books are far too little known, so that the strongest maritime nation in the whole world is ignorant of vital facts concerning



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the men who make her prosperity. Let any one who is well informed enter a theatre when a nautical drama is presented; he will find the most ridiculous spectacle that the mind of man can conceive. On one occasion, when a cat came on to the stage at Drury Lane and ran across the heaving billows of the canvas ocean, the audience roared with laughter; but to the judicious critic the real cause for mirth was the behaviour of the nautical persons who figured in the drama. The same ignorance holds everywhere. Seamen scarcely ever think of describing their life to people on shore, and the majority of landsmen regard a sea-voyage as a dull affair, to be begun with regret and ended with joy. Dull! Alas, it is dull for people who have dim eyes and commonplace minds; but for the man who has learned to gaze aright at the Creator's works there is not a heavy minute from the time when the dawn trembles in the gray sky until the hour when, with stars and sea-winds in her raiment, night sinks on the sea. Dull! As well describe the rush of the turbulent Strand or the populous splendour of Regent Street by that word! I have always held that a man cannot be considered as educated if he is unable to wait an hour in a railway-station for a train without *ennui*. What is education good for if it does not give us resources which may enable us to gather delight or instruction from every sight and sound that may fall on our nerves? The most melancholy spectacle in the world is presented by the stolid citizen who yawns over his *Bradshaw* while the swift panoramas of Charing Cross or Euston are gliding by him. Men who are rightly constituted find delight in the very quietude and isolation of sea-life; they know how to derive pure entertainment from the pageant of the sky and the music of winds and waters, and they experience a piquant delight by reason of the contrast between the loneliness of the sea and the eager struggling life of the City. Proceeding, as is my custom, by examples, I shall give precise descriptions of specimen days which anybody may spend on the wandering wastes of the ocean. "All things pertaining to the life of man are of interest to me," said the Roman; and he showed his wisdom by that saying.

Dawn. Along the water-line a pale leaden streak appears, and little tremulous ripples of gray run gently upwards, until a broad band of mingled white and scarlet shines with cold radiance. The mystery of the sea is suddenly removed, and we can watch the strange serpentine belts that twine and glitter all round from our vessel to the horizon. The light is strong before the sun appears; and perhaps that brooding hour, when Nature seems to be turning in her sleep, is the best of the whole day. The dew lies thickly on deck, and the chill of the night hangs in the air; but soon a red arc looms up gorgeously at the sea-line; long rays spread out like a sheaf of splendid swords on the blue; there is, as it were, a wild dance of colour in the noble vault, where cold green and pink and crimson wind and flush and softly glide in mystic mazes; and then—the sun! The great flaming disc seems to poise for a little, and all around it—pierced here and there by the steely rays—the clouds hang like tossing scarlet plumes.



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Like a warrior-angel sped  
On a mighty mission,  
Light and life about him shed—  
A transcendent vision!

Mailed in gold and fire he stands,  
And, with splendours shaken,  
Bids the slumbering seas and lands  
Quicken and awaken.

Day is on us. Dreams are dumb,  
Thought has light for neighbour;  
Room! The rival giants come—  
Lo, the Sun and Labour!

After witnessing that lordly spectacle, who can wonder at Zoroaster? As the lights from east and west meet and mingle, and the sky rears its blue immensity, it is hard to look on for very gladness.

I shall suppose that we are on a small vessel—for, if we sail in a liner, or even in an ordinary big steamer, it is somewhat like moving about on a floating factory. The busy life of a sailor begins, for Jack rarely has an idle minute while he is on deck. Landsmen can call in help when their house needs repairing, but sailors must be able to keep every part of *their* house in perfect order; and there is always something to be done. But we are lazy; we toil not, neither do we tar ropes, and our main business is to get up a thoroughly good appetite while we watch the deft sailor-men going about their business. It is my belief that a landsman might spend a month without a tedious hour, if he would only take the trouble to watch everything that the men do and find out why it is done. Ages on ages of storm and stress are answerable for the most trifling device that the sailor employs. How many and many lives were lost before the Norsemen learned to support the masts of their winged dragons by means of bull's-hide ropes! How many shiploads of men were laid at the mercy of the travelling seas before the Scandinavians learned to use a fixed rudder instead of a huge oar! Not a bolt or rope or pulley or eyelet-hole has been fixed in our vessel save through the bitter experience of centuries; one might write a volume about that mainsail, showing how its rigid, slanting beauty and its tremendous power were gradually attained by evolution from the ugly square lump of matting which swung from the masthead of Mediterranean craft. But we must not philosophise; we must enjoy. The fresh morning breeze runs merrily over the ripples and plucks off their crests; our vessel leans prettily, and you hear a tinkling hiss as she shears through the lovely green hillocks. Sometimes she thrusts away a burst of spray, and in the midst of the white spurt there shines a rainbow. It may happen that the rainbows come thickly for half an hour at a time, and then we seem to be passing through a fairy scene. Go under the main-yard and look away to leeward. The wind roars out of the mainsail and streams over you in a cold flood; but you do not mind that,

for there is the joyous expanse of emerald and snow dancing under the glad sun. There is something unspeakably delightful in the rushing never-ending procession of

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waves that passes away, away in merry ranks to the shining horizon; and all true lovers of the sea are exhilarated by the sweet tumult. Remember I am talking about a fine day; I shall come to the bad weather in good time. On this ineffable morning a lady may come up and walk briskly in the crisp air; but indeed women are the best and coolest of sailors in any weather when once their preliminary troubles are over. The hours fly past, and we hail the announcement of breakfast with a sudden joy which tells of gross materialism. I may say, by-the-way, that our lower nature, or what sentimental persons call our lower nature, comes out powerfully at sea, and men of the most refined sort catch themselves in the act of wondering time after time when meals will be ready. For me I think that it is no more gross to delight in flavours than it is to delight in colours or harmonies, and one of my main reasons for dwelling on the delights of the sea lies in the fact that the voyager learns to take an exquisite, but quite rational, delight in the mere act of eating. I know that I ought to speak as though dinner were an ignoble institution; I know that the young lady who said, "Thanks—I rarely eat," represented a class who pretend to devote themselves to higher joys; but I decline to talk cant on any terms, and I say that the healthy, hearty hunger bestowed by the open sea is one of God's good gifts.

The sweet morning passes away, and somehow our thoughts run in bright grooves. That is the strange thing about the sea—its moods have an instant effect on the mind; and, as it changes with wild and swift caprice, the seafarer finds that his views of life alter with tantalizing but pleasant suddenness. Just now I am speaking only of content and exhilaration; but I may soon see another side of the picture. The afternoon glides by like the morning; no churlish houses and chimney-pots hide the sun, and we see him describe his magnificent curve, while, with mysterious potency, he influences the wind. Dull! Why, on shore we should gaze out on the same streets or fields or trees; but here our residence is driven along like a flying cloud, and we gain a fresh view with every mile! I confess that I like sailing in populous waters, for indeed the lonely tropical seas and the brassy skies are not by any means to be regarded as delightful; but for the present we are supposing ourselves to be in the track of vessels, and there is some new and poignant interest for every hour. Watch this vast pallid cloud that looms up far away; the sun strikes on the cloud, and straightway the snowy mass gleams like silver; on it comes, and soon we see a superb four-masted clipper broadside on to us. A royal fabric she is; every snowy sail is drawing, and she moves with resistless force and matchless grace through the water, while a boiling wreath of milky foam rushes away from her bows, and swathes of white dapple the green river that seems to pour past her majestic sides. The emigrants

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lean over the rail, and gaze wistfully at us. Ah, how many thousands of miles they must travel ere they reach their new home! Strange and pitiful it is to think that so few of them will ever see the old home again; and yet there is something bright and hopeful in the spectacle, if we think not of individuals, but of the world's future. Under the Southern Cross a mighty state is rising; the inevitable movement of populations is irresistible as the tides of mid-ocean; and those wistful emigrants who quietly wave their handkerchiefs to us are about to assist in working out the destiny of a new world. Dull! The passing of that great vessel gives matter for grave thought. She swings away, and we may perhaps try to run alongside for a while, but the immense drag of her four towers of canvas soon draws her clear, and she speedily looms once more like a cloud on the horizon. Good-bye! The squat collier lumbers along, and her leisurely grimy skipper salutes as we near him. It is marvellous to reflect that the whole of our coal-trade was carried on in those queer tubs only sixty years ago. They are passing away, and the gallant, ignorant, comical race of sailors who manned them has all but disappeared; the ugly sordid iron box that goes snorting past us, belching out jets of water from her dirty side—that is the agency that destroyed the colliers, and, alas, destroyed the finest breed of seamen that ever the world saw! So rapidly do new sights and sounds greet us that the night steals down almost before we are aware of its approach. The day is for joy; but, ah, the night is for subtle overmastering rapture, for pregnant gloom, for thoughts that lie too deep for tears! If a wind springs up when the last ray of the sun shoots over the shoulder of the earth, then the ship roars through an inky sea, and the mysterious blending of terror and ecstasy cannot be restrained. Hoarsely the breeze shrieks in the cordage, savagely the water roars as it darts away astern like a broad fierce white flame. The vessel seems to spring forward and shake herself with passion as the sea retards her, and the whole wild symphony of humming ropes, roaring water, screaming wind, sets every pulse bounding. Should the moon shine out from the charging clouds, then earth has not anything to show more fair; the broad track of light looks like an immeasurable river peopled by fiery serpents that dart and writhe and interwind, until the eye aches with gazing on them. Sleep seems impossible at first, and yet by degrees the popped touch lulls our nerves, and we slumber without heeding the harrowing groans of the timbers or the confused cries of the wind.



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So much for the glad weather; but, when the sky droops low, and leaping waves of mournful hue seem to rear themselves and mingle with the clouds, then the gladness is not so apparent. Still the exulting rush of the ship through the gray seas and her contemptuous shudder as she shakes off the masses of water that thunder down on her are fine to witness. Even a storm, when cataracts of hissing water plunge over the vessel and force every one to “hang on anywhere,” is by no means without its delights; but I must candidly say that a ship is hardly the place for a woman when the wild winds try their strength against the works of man. On the whole, if we reckon up the pains and pleasures of life on board ship, the balance is all in favour of pleasure. The sailors have a toilsome life, and must endure much; but they have health. It is the sense of physical well-being that makes the mind so easy when one is on the sea; and refined men who have lived in the fore-castle readily declare that they were happy but for the invariable dirt. Instead of trooping to stuffy lodgings, those of my readers who have the nerve should, if not this year, then next summer, go right away and take a cheap and charming holiday on the open sea.

*October, 1887.*

*WAR.*

The brisk Pressmen are usually exceedingly busy in calculating the chances of a huge fight—indeed they spend a good part of each year in that pleasing employment. Smug diplomatists talk glibly about “war clearing the air;” and the crowd—the rank and file—chatter as though war were a pageant quite divorced from wounds and death, or a mere harmless hurly-burly where certain battalions receive thrashings of a trifling nature. It is saddening to notice the levity with which the most awful of topics is treated, and especially is it sad to see how completely the women and children are thrust out of mind by belligerent persons. We who have gazed on the monster of War, we who have looked in the whites—or rather the reds—of his loathsome eyes, cannot let this burst of frivolity work mischief without one temperate word of warning and protest.

Pleasant it is to watch the soldiers as they march along the streets, or form in their superb lines on parade. No man or woman of any sensibility can help feeling proudly stirred when a Cavalry regiment goes by. The clean, alert, upright men, with their sure seat; the massive war-horses champing their bits and shaking their accoutrements: the rhythmic thud of hoofs, the keen glitter of steel, and the general air of power, all combine to form a spectacle that sets the pulses beating faster. Then, again, observe the strange elastic rhythm of the march as a battalion of tall Highlanders moves past. The fifes and drums cease, there is a silence broken only by that sinuous beautiful onward movement of lines of splendid men, until the thrilling scream of the pipes shatters the air, and the mad tumult of warlike sound makes even a Southron’s nerves quiver.

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Then, once more, watch the deadly, steady march of a regiment of Guards. The stalwart men step together, and, as the red ranks sway on, it seems as though no earthly power could stand against them. The gloomy bearskins are like a brooding dark cloud, and the glitter of the rifle-barrels carries with it certain sinister terrible suggestions. The gaiety and splendour of Cavalry and Infantry all gain increased power over the imagination since we know that each of those gaily clad fellows would march to his doom without a tremor or a murmur if he received the word. Poor Tommy Atkins is surrounded by a sort of halo in the popular imagination, simply because it is known that he may one day have to deal forth death to an enemy, or take his own doom, according to the chances of combat. I need say little about the field-days and reviews which have caused so many martially-minded young men to take the shilling. The crash of the small-arm firing, the wild galloping of hasty aides-de-camp, the measured movement of serried lines, the rapid flight of flocks of bedizened staff-officers, all make up a very exciting and confusing picture, and many a youngster has fancied that war must be a glorious game. Let us leave the picturesque and theatrical business and come to the dry prose.

So far from being an affair of glitter, excitement, fierce joy, fierce triumph, war is but a round of hideous hours which bring memories of squalor, filth, hunger, wretchedness, dull toil, unspeakable misery. Take it at its best, and consider what a modern engagement really means. Recollect, moreover, that I am about to use sentences accurate as a photograph. The sportive Pressman says, "Vernon began to find the enemy's cloud of sharp-shooters troublesome, so the 5th sought better cover on the right, leaving Brown free to develop his artillery fire." "Troublesome!" Translate that word, and it means this: Private Brown and Private Jones are lying behind the same low bank. Jones raises his head; there comes a sound like "Roo-o-osh—pht!"—then a horrible thud. Jones glares, grasps at nothing with convulsed hands, and rolls sideways with a long shudder. The ball took him in the temple. Serjeant Morrison says, "Now, men, try for that felled log! Double!" A few men make a short rush, and gain the solid cover; but one throws up his hands when half way, gives a choking yell, springs in the air, and falls down limp. The same thing is going on over a mile of country, while the shell-fire is gradually gaining power—and we may be sure that the enemy are suffering at the hands of our marksmen. And now suppose that an infantry brigade receives orders to charge. "Charge!" The word carries magnificent poetic associations, but, alas, it is a very prosaic affair nowadays! The lines move onward in short rushes, and it seems as if a swarm of ants were migrating warily. The strident voices of the officers ring here and there: the men edge their way onward: it seems as if there were no method in the advance; but



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somehow the loose wavy ranks are kept well in hand, and the main movement proceeds like machinery. "I feel a bit queer," says Bill Williams to a veteran friend. "Never mind—'taint every one durst say that," says the friend. "Whoo-o-sh!" a muffled thump, and the veteran falls forward, dropping his rifle. He struggles up on hands and knees, but a rush of blood chokes him, and he drops with a groan. He will lie there for a long time before his burning throat is moistened by a cup of water, and he knows only too well that the surgeon will merely shake his head when he sees him. The brigade still advances; gradually the sputtering crackle in their front grows into a low steady roar; a stream of lead whistles in the air, and the long lurid line of flame glows with the sustained glare of a fire among furze. Men fall at every yard, but the hoarse murmur of the dogged advance never ceases. At last the time comes for the rush. The ranks are trimmed up by imperceptible degrees; the men set their teeth, and a strange eager look comes over many a face. The eyes of the youngsters stare glassily; they can see the wood from which the enemy must be dislodged at any price, but they can form no definite ideas; they merely grip their rifles and go on mechanically. The word is given—the dark lines dash forward; the firing from the wood breaks out in a crash of fury—there is a long harsh rattle, then a chance crack like a thunder-clap, and then a whirring like the spinning of some demoniac mill. Curses ring out amid a low sound of hard breathing; the ranks are gapped here and there as a man wriggles away like a wounded rabbit, or another bounds upward with a frantic ejaculation. Then comes the fighting at close quarters. Perhaps kind women who are misled by the newspaper-writer's brisk babblement may like to know what that means, so I give the words of the best eyewitness that ever gazed on warfare. He took down his notes by the light of burning wood, and he had no time to think of grammar. All his words were written like mere convulsive cries, but their main effect is too vivid to be altered. Notice that he rarely concludes a sentence, for he wanted to save time, and the bullets were cutting up the ground and the trees all round him. "Patches of the wood take fire, and several of the wounded, unable to move, are consumed. Quite large spaces are swept over, burning the dead also; some of the men have their hair and beards singed, some burns on their faces and hands, others holes burnt in their clothing. The flashes of fire from the cannon, the quick glaring flames and smoke, and the immense roar—the musketry so general; the light nearly bright enough for each side to see the other; the crashing, tramping of men—the yelling—close quarters—hand-to-hand conflicts. Each side stands up to it, brave, determined as demons; and still the wood's on fire—still many are not only scorched—too many, unable to move, are burned to death. Who knows the conflict,



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hand-to-hand—the many conflicts in the dark—those shadowy, tangled, flashing, moon-beamed woods—the writhing groups and squads—the cries, the din, the cracking guns and pistols, the distant cannon—the cheers and calls and threats and awful music of the oaths, the indescribable mix, the officers' orders, persuasions, encouragements—the devils fully roused in human hearts—the strong shout, 'Charge, men—charge!'—the flash of the naked swords, and rolling flame and smoke? And still the broken, clear, and clouded heaven; and still again the moonlight pouring silvery soft its radiant patches over all.”

There is a description vivid as lightning, though there is not a properly-constructed sentence in it. Gruesome, cruel, horrible! Is it not enough to make the women of our sober sensible race declare for ever against the flaunting stay-at-homes who would egg us on to war? By all means let us hold to the old-fashioned dogged ways, but let us beware of rushing into the squalid vortex of war. And now let us see what follows the brilliant charge and bayonet fight. How many ladies consider what the curt word “wounded” means? It conveys no idea to them, and they are too apt to stray off into the dashing details that tell of a great wrestle of armies. One eminent man—whom I believe to have uttered a libel—has declared that women like war, and that they are usually the means of urging men on. He is a very sedate and learned philosopher who wrote that statement, and yet I cannot believe it. Ah, no! Our ladies can give their dearest up to death when the State calls on them, but they will never be like the odious viragoes of the Roman circus. At any rate, if any woman acts according to the dictum of the philosopher after reading my bitterly true words, we shall hold that our influence is departed. Therefore with ruthless composure I follow my observer—a man whose pure and holy spirit upheld him as he ministered to sufferers for year after year.

“Then the camps of the wounded. Oh, heavens, what scene is this? Is this indeed humanity—these butchers' shambles? There are several of them. There they lie, in the largest, in an open space in the woods—from two to three hundred poor fellows. The groans and screams, the odour of blood mixed with the fresh scent of the night, the grass, the trees—that slaughter-house! Oh, well is it their mothers, their sisters, cannot see them, cannot conceive, and never conceived such things! One man is shot by a shell both in the arm and leg; both are amputated—there lie the rejected members. Some have their legs blown off, some bullets through the breast, some indescribably horrid wounds in the head—all mutilated, sickening, torn, gouged out, some in the abdomen, some mere boys.” Alas, I have quoted enough—and may never such a task come before me again! The picture is sharp as an etching; it is drawn with a shudder of the soul. Is that grim sedate man right when he says that women are the moving influence that drives men to such carnage? Would you wantonly advocate war? Never! I reject the solemn philosopher's saying, in spite of his logic and his sententiousness.



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Who shall speak of the awful monotony of the hospital camps, where men die like flies, and where regret, sympathy, kindness are blotted from the hardened soldier's breast? People are not cruel by nature, but the vague picturesque language of historians and other general writers prevents men and women from forming just opinions. I believe that, if one hundred wounded men could be transported from a battle-field and laid down in the public square of any town or city for the population to see, then the gazers would say among themselves, "So this is war, is it? Well, for our parts, we shall be very cautious before we raise any agitation that might force our Government into any conflict. We can die if our liberties are threatened, for there are circumstances in which it would be shameful to live, but we shall never do anything which may bring about results such as those before us." That would be a fair and temperate mode of talking—far different from the airy babble of the warlike scribe.

An argumentative person may stop us here and ask, "Are you of opinion that it is possible to abolish warfare?" Unfortunately, we can cherish no such pleasing hope. I do emphatically believe that in time men will come to see the wild folly of engaging in sanguinary struggles; but the growth of their wisdom will be slow. Action and reaction are equal; the fighting instinct has been impressed on our nature by hereditary transmission for countless generations, and we cannot hope suddenly to make man a peaceful animal any more than we can hope to breed setters from South African wild dogs. But the conditions of life are gradually changing, and the very madness which has made Europe into a huge barrack may work its own cure. The burden will probably grow so intolerable that the most embruted of citizens will ask themselves why they bear it, and a rapid revolution may undo the growth of centuries. The scientific men point to the huge warfare that goes on from the summit of the Himalayas to the depths of the ocean slime, and they ask how men can be exempt from the universal struggle for existence. But it is by no means certain that the pressure of population in the case of man will always force on struggles—at any rate, struggles that can be decided only by death and agony. Little by little we are learning something of the laws that govern our hitherto mysterious existence, and we have good hopes that by and by our race may learn to be mutually helpful, so that our span of life may be passed with as much happiness as possible. Men will strive against each other, but the striving will not be carried on to an accompaniment of slaughter and torture. There are keen forms of competition which, so far from being painful, give positive pleasure to those who engage in them; there are triumphs which satisfy the victor without mortifying the vanquished; and, in spite of the indiscreet writers who have called forth this Essay, I hold that such harmless forms

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of competition will take the place of the brutal strife that adds senselessly to the sum of human woe. Our race has outgrown so many forms of brutality, so many deliberate changes have taken place in the course of even two thousand years, that the final change which shall abolish war is almost certain to come. We find that about one thousand nine hundred years ago a polished gentleman like Julius Caesar gravely congratulates himself on the fact that his troops destroyed in cold blood forty thousand people—men, women, and children. No man in the civilized world dare do such a deed now, even if he had the mind for the carnage. The feeling with which we read Caesar's frigid recital measures the arc of improvement through which we have passed. May the improvement go on! We can continue to progress only through knowledge; if our people—our women especially—are wantonly warlike, then our action will be wantonly warlike; knowledge alone can save us from the guilt of blood, and that knowledge I have tried to set forth briefly. By wondrous ways does our Master work out His ends. Let us pray that He may hasten the time when nation shall not rise up against nation, neither shall they draw the sword any more.

*December, 1886.*

*DRINK.*

I have no intention of imitating those intemperate advocates of temperance who frighten people by their thunderous and extravagant denunciations; I leave high moral considerations on one side for the present, and our discussion will be purely practical, and, if possible, helpful. The duty of helpful men and women is not to rave about horrors and failures and misfortunes, but to aim coolly at remedial measures; and I am firmly convinced that such remedial measures can be employed only by private effort. State interference is always to be deprecated; individual action alone has power to better the condition of our sorely-tempted race. With sorrow too keen for words, I hear of blighted homes, intellects abased, children starved, careers wrecked, wives made wretched, crime fostered; and I fully sympathize with the men and women who are stung into wild speech by the sight of a curse that seems all-powerful in Britain. But I prefer to cultivate a sedate and scientific attitude of mind; I do not want to repeat catalogues of evils; I want to point out ways whereby the intemperate may be cured. Above all, I wish to abate the panic which paralyzes the minds of some afflicted people, and which causes them to regard a drunkard or even a tippler as a hopeless victim. "Hopeless" is a word used by ignorant persons, by cowards, and by fools. When I hear some mourner say, "Alas! we can do nothing with him—he is a slave!" I feel impelled to reply, "What do you know about it? Have you given yourself the trouble to do more than preach? Listen, and follow the simple directions which I lay down for you."



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First, I deal with the unhappy beings who are called periodical drinkers. These are generally men who possess great ability and a capacity for severe stretches of labour. They may be artists, writers, men of business, mechanics—anything; but in nearly every case some special faculty of brain is developed to an extraordinary degree, and the man is able to put forth the most strenuous exertions at a pinch. Let us name some typical examples. Turner was a man of phenomenal industry, but at intervals his temperament craved for some excitement more violent and distracting than any that he could get from the steady strain of daily work. He used to go away to Wapping, and spend weeks in the filthiest debauch with the lowest characters in London. None of his companions guessed who he was; they only knew that he had more money than they had, and that he behaved in a more bestial manner than any of those who frequented the “Fox under the Hill” and other pleasing hostelries. Turner pursued his reckless career, till his money was gone, and then he returned to his gruesome den and proceeded to turn out artistic prodigies until the fit came upon him once more. Benvenuto Cellini was subject to similar paroxysms, during which he behaved like a maniac. Our own novelist Bulwer Lytton disappeared at times, and plunged into the wildest excesses among wretches whom he would have loathed when he was in his normal state of mind. He used to dress himself as a navvy, or as a sailor, and no one would have recognized the weird intellectual face when the great writer was clad in rags, and when the brutal mask of intoxication had fallen over his face. It was during his recovery from one of these terrible visitations that he drove the woman whom he most loved from his house, and brought on that breach which resulted in irreparable misery. Poor George Morland, the painter, had wild spells of debauch, during which he spent his time in boxing-saloons among ruffianly prize-fighters and jockeys. His vice grew upon him, his mad fits became more and more frequent, and at last his exquisite work could be produced only when his nerve was temporarily steadied by copious doses of brandy. Keats, who “worshipped Beauty,” was afflicted by seizures like those of Turner and Morland. On one occasion he remained in a state of drunkenness for six weeks; and it is a wonder that his marvellous mind retained its freshness at all after the poison had passed from amid the delicate tissues of the brain. He conquered himself at last; but I fear that his health was impaired by his few mad outbursts. Charles Lamb, who is dear to us all, reduced himself to a pitiable state by giving way to outbreaks of alcoholic craving. When Carlyle saw him, the unhappy essayist was semi-imbecile from the effects of drink; and the savage Scotsman wrote some cruel words which will unfortunately cleave to Lamb’s cherished memory for long. Lamb fought against his failing; he suffered agonies of remorse; he bitterly



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blamed himself for “buying days of misery by nights of madness;” but the sweet soul was enchained, and no struggles availed to work a blessed transformation. Read his “Confessions of a Drunkard.” It is the most awful chapter in English literature, for it is written out of the agony of a pure and well-meaning mind, and its tortured phrases seem to cry out from the page that holds their misery. We are placed face to face with a dread aspect of life, and the remorseless artist paints his own pitiable case as though he longed to save his fellow-creatures even at the expense of his own self-abasement. All these afflicted creatures sought the wrong remedy for the exhaustion and the nameless craving that beset them when they were spent with toil. The periodic drinker takes his dive into the sensual mud-bath just at the times when eager exertion has brought on lassitude of body and mind. He begins by timidly drinking a little of the deleterious stuff, and he finds that his mental images grow bright and pleasant. A moment comes to him when he would not change places with the princes of the earth, and he endeavours to make that moment last long. He fails, and only succeeds in dropping into drunkenness. On the morning after his first day he feels depressed; but his biliary processes are undisturbed, and he is able to begin again without any sense of nausea. His quantity is increased until he gradually reaches the point when glasses of spirits are poured down with feverish rapidity. His appetite is sometimes voracious, sometimes capricious, sometimes absent altogether. His stomach becomes ulcerated, and he can obtain release from the grinding uneasiness only by feeding the inflamed organ with more and more alcohol. The liver ceases to act healthily, the blood becomes charged with bile, and one morning the wretch awakes feeling that life is not worth having. He has slept like a log; but all night through his outraged brain has avenged itself by calling up crowds of hideous dreams. The blood-vessels of the eye are charged with bilious particles, and these intruding specks give rise to fearful, exaggerated images of things that never yet were seen on sea or land. Grim faces leer at the dreamer and make mock of him; frightful animals pass in procession before him; and hosts of incoherent words are jabbered in his ear by unholy voices. He wakes, limp, exhausted, trembling, nauseated, and he feels as if he must choose between suicide and—more drink. If he drinks at this stage, he is lost; and then is the time to fix upon him and draw him by main force from the slough.

Now some practitioners say, “Let him drop it gradually;” and they proceed to stir every molecule of alcohol in the system into vile activity by adding small doses of wine or spirit to the deadly accumulation. The man’s brain is impoverished, and the mistaken doctors proceed to impoverish it more, so that a patient who should be cured in forty-eight hours is kept in dragging misery for a month or more. The proper



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mode of treatment is widely different. You want to nourish the brain speedily, and at any cost, ere the ghastly depression drives the agonized wretch to the arms of Circe once more. First, then, give him milk. If you try milk alone, the stomach will not retain it long, so you must mix the nourishing fluid with soda-water. Half an hour afterwards administer a spoonful of meat-essence. Beware of giving the patient any hot fluid, for that will damage him almost as much as alcohol. Continue with alternate half-hourly instalments of milk and meat-essence; supply no solid food whatever; and do not be tempted by the growing good spirits of your charge to let him go out of doors amid temptation. At night, after some eight hours of this rapid feeding, you must take a risky step. Make sure that the drinker is calm, and then prepare him for sleep. That preparation is accomplished thus. Get a draught of hydrate of chloral made up, and be sure that you describe your man's physique—this is most important—to the apothecary who serves you. A very light dose will suffice, and, when it is swallowed, the drugged man should be left in quietude. He will sleep heavily, perhaps for as much as twelve hours, and no noise must be allowed to come near him. If he is waked suddenly, the consequences may be bad, so that those who go to look at him must use precautions to ensure silence. In the morning he will awake with his brain invigorated, his muscles unagitated, and his craving utterly gone. It is like magic; for a man who was prostrate on Sunday morning is brisk and eager for work on Monday at noon. Whenever the cured man feels his craving arise after a spell of labour, he should at once recuperate his brain by rapidly-repeated doses of the easily-assimilated meat-essence, and this, with a little strong black coffee taken at short intervals, will tide him over the evil time. He saves money, he keeps his working power, and he gives no shock to his health. Since a beneficent doctor first described this cure to the British Medical Association, hundreds have been restored and ultimately reclaimed.

And now as to the persons who are called "soakers." Scattered over the country are thousands of men and women who do not go to bestial excesses, but who steadily undermine their constitutions by persistent tipping. Such a man as a commercial traveller imbibes twenty or thirty nips in the course of the day; he eats well in the evening, though he is usually repelled by the sight of food in the morning, and he preserves an outward appearance of ruddy health. Then there are the female soakers, whom doctors find to be the most troublesome of all their patients. There is not a medical man in large practice who has not a shocking percentage of lady inebriates on his list, and the cases are hard to manage. An ill-starred woman, whose well-to-do husband is engaged in business all day, finds that a dull life-weariness overtakes her. If she has many children, her enforced activity preserves her from danger; but, if she is childless, the subtle temptation is apt to overcome her. She seeks unnatural exaltation, and the very secrecy which is necessary lends a strange zest to the pursuit of a numbing vice. Then we have such busy men as auctioneers, ship-brokers, water-clerks, ship-captains, buyers for great firms—all of whom are more or less a prey to the custom of "standing liquors."



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The soaker goes on without meeting any startling check for a good while; but, by slow degrees, the main organs of the body suffer, and a chronic state of alcoholic irritation is set up. A man becomes suspected by his employers and slighted by his abstemious friends; he loses health, character, prospects; and yet he is invariably ready to declare that no one ever saw him the worse for drink. The tipping goes on till the resultant irritation reaches an acute stage, and the faintest disturbing cause brings on *delirium tremens*. There is only one way with people thus afflicted. They must be made to loathe alcohol, and their nerves must at the same time be artificially stimulated. The cure is not precisely easy, but it is certain. If my directions are followed out, then a man who is in the last stage of alcoholic debility will not only regain a certain measure of health, but he will turn with horror from the stuff that fascinated him. In the case of the soaker a little wine may be given at meal-times during the first stages of the cure; but he (or she) will soon reject even wine. Strong black coffee, or tea, should be given as often as possible—the oftener the better—and iced soda-water should be administered after a heavy meal. Take this prescription and let it be made up—Rx Acid. Acet. eight ounces. Sponge down the patient's spine with this fluid until the parts moistened tingle smartly; and let this be done night and morning. Also get the following from your chemist—Rx Ext. Cinch. Rub. Liq. four ounces—and give one teaspoonful in water after each meal. In a week the drinker will cease to desire alcohol, and in a month he will refuse it with disgust. His nerves will resume their healthy action, and, if he has not reached the stage of cirrhosis of the liver, he will become well and clear-headed. Recollect that this remedy is almost infallible, and then even the most greedy of literary students will hardly reproach me for placing a kind of medical chapter in the quarter usually devoted to disquisitions of another kind. From every side rises the bitter cry of those who see their loved ones falling victims to the seductive scourge; from all quarters the voices of earnest men are raised in passionate pleading; and in every great city there are noble workers who strive to rescue their fellow-creatures from drink as from a gulf of doom. My words are not addressed to the happy beings who can rejoice in the cheerfulness bestowed by wine; I have before me only the fortunes of those to whom wine is a mocker. Far be it from me to find fault with the good and sound-hearted men and women who are never scathed by their innocent potations; my attempt is directed toward saving the wreckages of civilization who perish in the grasp of the destroyer.

March, 1886.

CONCERNING PEOPLE WHO KNOW THEY ARE GOING WRONG.



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Some five years ago a mere accident gave to the world one of the most gruesome and remarkable pieces of literature that has ever perhaps been seen. A convict named Fury confessed to having committed a murder of an atrocious character. He was brought from prison, put on his trial at Durham, and condemned to death. Every chance was given him to escape his doom; but he persisted in providing the authorities with the most minutely accurate chain of evidence against himself; and, in the end, there was nothing for it but to cast him for death. Even when the police blundered, he carefully set them right—and he could not have proved his own guilt more clearly had he been the ablest prosecuting counsel in Britain. He held in his hand a voluminous statement which, as it seems, he wished to read before sentence of death was passed. The Court could not permit the nation's time to be thus expended; so the convict handed his manuscript to a reporter—and we thus have possibly the most absolutely curious of all extant thieves' literature. Somewhere in the recesses of Fury's wild heart there must have been good concealed; for he confessed his worst crime in the interests of justice, and he went to the scaffold with a serious and serene courage which almost made of him a dignified person. But, on his own confession, he must have been all his life long an unmitigated rascal—a predatory beast of the most dangerous kind. From his youth upward he had lived as a professional thief, and his pilferings were various and extensive. The glimpses of sordid villainy which he frankly gives are so poignantly effective that they put into the shade the most dreadful phases in the life of Villon. He was a mean sneaking wretch who supported a miserable existence on the fruits of other people's industry, and he closed his list of crimes by brutally stabbing an unhappy woman who had never harmed him. The fellow had genuine literary skill and a good deal of culture; his confession is very different from any of those contained in the *Newgate Calendar*—infinitely different from the crude horror of the statement which George Borrow quotes as a masterpiece of simple and direct writing. Here is Borrow's specimen, by-the-way—"So I went with them to a music-booth, where they made me almost drunk with gin and began to talk their flash language, which I did not understand"—and so on. But this dry simplicity is not in Fury's line. He has studied philosophy; he has reasoned keenly; and, as one goes on through his terrible narrative, one finds that he has mental capacity of a high order. He was as mean a rascal as Noah Claypole: and yet he had a fine clear-seeing intellect. Now what does this gallows-bird tell us? Why, his whole argument is intended to prove that he was an ill-used victim of society! Such a perversion has probably never been quite equalled; but it remains there to show us how firmly my theory stands—that the real scoundrel never knows himself to be a scoundrel. Had Fury settled down in a back street and employed his genius in writing stories, he could have earned a livelihood, for people would have eagerly read his experiences; but he preferred thieving—and then he turned round and blamed other people for hounding him on to theft.



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There are wrong-doers and wrong-doers; there are men who do ill in the world because they are entirely harmful by nature, and they seek to hurt their fellows—there are others who err only from weakness of will. I make no excuse for the weaklings; a man or woman who is weak may do more harm than the vilest criminal, and, when I hear any one talk about that nice man who is nobody's enemy but his own, I am instantly forced to remember a score or thereabouts of beings whom I know to have been the deadliest foes of those whom they should have cherished. Let us help those who err; but let us have no maudlin pity.

Moralists in general have made a somewhat serious error in supposing that one has only to show a man the true aspect of any given evil in order to make sure of his avoiding it. Of late so many sad things have been witnessed in public and private life that one is tempted to doubt whether abstract morality is of any use whatever in the world. One may tell a man that a certain course is dangerous or fatal; one may show by every device of logic and illustration that he should avoid the said course, and he will fully admit the truth of one's contentions; yet he is not deterred from his folly, and he goes on toward ruin with a sort of blind abandonment. "Blind," I say. That is but a formal phrase; for it happens that the very men and women who wreck their lives by doing foolish things are those who are keenest in detecting folly and wisest in giving advice to others. "Educate the people, and you will find that a steady diminution of vice, debauchery, and criminality must set in." I am not talking about criminality at present; but I am bound to say that no amount of enlightenment seems to diminish the tendency toward forms of folly which approach criminality. It is almost confounding to see how lucid of mind and how sane in theoretical judgment are the men who sometimes steep themselves in folly and even in vice. A wicked man boasted much of his own wickedness to some fellow-travellers during a brief sea-voyage. He said, "I like doing wrong for the sake of doing it. When you know you are outraging the senses of decent people there is a kind of excitement about it." This contemptible cynic told with glee stories of his own vileness which made good men look at him with scorn; but he fancied himself the cleverest of men. With the grave nearly ready for him, he could chuckle over things which he had done—things which proved him base, although none of them brought him within measurable distance of the dock. But such instances are quite rare. The man whose vision is lucid, but who nevertheless goes wrong, is usually a prey to constant misery or to downright remorse. Look at Burns's epitaph, composed by himself for himself. It is a dreadful thing. It is more than verse; it is a sermon, a prophecy, a word of doom; and it tells with matchless terseness the story of many men who are at this hour passing to grim ruin either of body or soul or both. Burns



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had such magnificent common sense that in his last two lines he sums up almost everything that is worth saying on the subject; and yet that fatal lack of will which I have so often lamented made all his theoretical good sense as naught. He could give one every essential of morality and conduct—in theory—and he was one of the most convincing and wise preachers who ever lived; but that mournful epitaph summarises the results of all his mighty gifts; and I think that it should be learned by all young men, on the chance that some few might possibly be warned and convinced. Advice is of scanty use to men of keen reason who are capable of composing precepts for themselves; but to the duller sort I certainly think that the flash of a sudden revelation given in concise words is beneficial. Here is poor Burns's saying—

Is there a man whose judgment clear  
Can others teach the course to steer,  
Yet runs himself life's mad career  
Wild as the wave?  
Here pause, and through the starting tear  
Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below  
Was quick to learn and wise to know,  
And keenly felt the kindly glow  
And softer flame;  
But thoughtless follies laid him low  
And stained his name.

Reader, attend! Whether thy soul  
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole;  
Or, darkling, grubs this earthly hole  
In low pursuit,  
Know—prudent cautious self-control  
Is wisdom's root.

When I ponder that forlorn masterpiece, I cannot help a tendency to despair; for I know, by multifarious experience of men, that the curt lines hint at profundities so vast as to baffle the best powers of comprehension. As I think of the hundreds of men who are minor copies of Burns, I have a passionate wish to call on the Power that sways us all and pray for pity and guidance. A most wise—should I say “wise”?—and brilliant man had brought himself very low through drink, and was dying solely through the effects of a debauch which had lasted for years with scarcely an interval of pure sanity. He was beloved by all; he had a most sweet nature; he was so shrewd and witty that it seemed impossible for him to be wrong about anything. On his deathbed he talked with lovely serenity, and he seemed rather like some thrice-noble disciple of Socrates than like one



who had cast away all that the world has worth holding. He knew every folly that he had committed, and he knew its exact proportions; he was consulted during his last days by young and old, who recognized the well-nigh superhuman character of his wisdom; and yet he had abundantly proved himself to be one of the most unwise men living. How strange! How infinitely pathetic! Few men of clearer vision ever came on this earth; but, with his flashing eyes open, he walked into snare after snare, and the last of the devil's traps caught him fatally. Even when he was too weak to stir, he said that, if he could move, he would be sure to take the old path again. Well may the warning devotees cry, "Have mercy upon us!" Well may they bow themselves and wail for the weakness of man! Well may they cast themselves humbly on the bosom of the Infinite Pity! For, of a truth, we are a feeble folk, and, if we depended only on ourselves, it would be well that George Eliot's ghastly thought of simultaneous universal suicide should be put into practice speedily.



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Hark to the appalling words of wisdom uttered by the good man whose name I never miss mentioning because I wish all gentle souls to refresh themselves with his ineffable sweetness and tender fun! “Could the youth to whom the flavour of his first wine is delicious as the opening scenes of life or the entering upon some newly-discovered paradise look upon my desolation, and be made to understand what a dreary thing it is when a man shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and a passive will—to see his destruction and have no power to stop it, and yet to feel it all the way emanating from himself—to perceive all goodness emptied out of him, and yet not be able to forget a time when it was otherwise—to hear about the piteous spectacle of his own self-ruin—could he see my fevered eye, feverish with last night’s drinking and feverishly looking for this night’s repetition of the folly—could he feel the body of the death out of which I cry hourly, with feebler and feebler outcry, to be delivered—it were enough to make him dash the sparkling beverage to the earth in all the pride of its mantling temptation, to make him clasp his teeth,

And not undo ’em  
To suffer wet damnation to run thro’ ’em.”

Can that be beaten for utter lucidity and directness? Not by any master of prose known to us—not by any man who ever wrote in prose or in verse. The vision is so completely convincing, the sense of actuality given by the words is so haunting, that, not even Dickens could have equalled it. The man who wrote those searing words is to this day remembered and spoken of with caressing gentleness by all men of intellect, refinement, quick fancy, genial humour; the editing of his works has occupied a great part of the lifetime of a most distinguished ecclesiastic. Could he avoid the fell horror against which he warned others? No. With all his dread knowledge, he went on his sorrowful way—and he remained the victim of his vice until the bitter end. It was Charles Lamb.

A gambler is usually the most prodigal of men in the matter of promises. If he is clever, he is nearly always quite ready to smile mournfully at his own infatuation, and he will warn inexperienced youngsters—unless he wants to rob them.

In sum, intellect, wit, keenness, lucidity of vision, perfect reasoning power, are all useless in restraining a man from proceeding to ruin unless some steadying agency is allied with them. After much sad brooding, I cannot but conclude that a fervent religious faith is the only thing that will give complete security; and it will be a bitter day for England and the world if ever flippancy and irreligion become general.

*June, 1889.*

*THE SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF THE “BAR.”*



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A great American writer has lately given a terrible account of "The Social Influence of the Saloon" in his country. The article is very grave, and every word is weighed, but the cold precision of the paper attracts the reader with a horrible fascination. The author does not so much regret the enormous waste of money, though he allows that about two hundred millions of pounds sterling are spent yearly in the States on strong drink; but he mourns most because of the steady ruin which he sees overtaking the social happiness of his country. The saloon is subtly corrupting the men of America, and the ghastly plagues of selfishness, brutality, and immorality are spreading with cruel swiftness. The great author's conclusion is more than startling, and I confess to having caught my breath when I read it. He says in effect, "We sacrificed a million men in order to do away with slavery, but we now have working in our midst a curse which is infinitely worse than slavery. One day we shall be obliged to save ourselves from ruin, even if we have to stamp out the trade in alcohol entirely, and that by means of a civil war." Strong words—and yet the man speaks with intense conviction: and his very quietude only serves to emphasise the awful nature of his disclosures. As I read on I saw with horror that the description of the state of things in America accurately fits our own country. We do not talk of a "saloon" here, but "bar" means the same thing; and the "bar" is crushing out the higher life of the English middle-class as surely as the saloon is destroying American manhood. Amid all our material prosperity, amid all the complexities of our amazing community, an evil is at work which gathers power daily and which is actually assassinating, as it were, every moral quality that has made England strong and beneficent. Begin with a picture. The long curved counter glistens under the flare of the gas; the lines of gaudy bottles gleam like vulgar, sham jewelry; the glare, the glitter, the garish refulgence of the place dazzle the eye, and the sharp acrid whiffs of vile odour fall on the senses with a kind of mephitic influence. The evening is wearing away, and the broad space in front of the bar is crowded. A hoarse crashing babble goes steadily on, forming the ground-bass of an odious symphony; shrill and discordant laughter rises by fits and starts above the low tumult; a coarse joke sets one group sniggering; a vile oath rings out from some foul-mouthed roysterer; and at intervals some flushed and bleared creature breaks into a slavering laugh which has a sickly resemblance to weeping. At one of the side-tables a sodden brute leans forward and wags his head to and fro with ignoble solemnity; another has fallen asleep and snores at intervals with a nauseous rattle; smart young men, dressed fashionably, fling chance witticisms at the busy barmaids, and the nymphs answer with glib readiness. This is the home of Jollity and Good-fellowship; this



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is the place from which Care is banished; this is the happy corner where the social glass is dispensed. Alas for the jollity and the sociability and all the rest of it! Force yourself to study the vile spectacle, and you will soon harbour a brood of aching reflections. The whole of that chattering, swilling mob are employing their muddled minds on frivolity or obscenity, or worse things still. You will hear hardly an intelligent word; you will not catch a sound of sensible discussion; the scraps of conversation that reach you alternate between low banter, low squabbling, objectionable narrative, and histories of fights or swindles or former debauches.

Middle-aged men tell interminable stories about money or smart strokes of business; youngsters wink and look unspeakably wise as they talk on the subject of the spring handicaps; wild spirits tell of their experiences at a glove-fight in some foul East-end tavern; amorous exploits are detailed with a fulness and freedom which would extremely amaze the ladies who form the subject of the conversation. In all the nasty confusion you never hear a word that can be called manly, unless you are prepared to allow the manliness of pugilism. Each quarter-hour sees the company grow more and more incoherent; the laughter gradually becomes senseless, and loses the last indication of pure merriment; the reek thickens; the dense air is permeated with queasy smells which rise from the fusel oil and the sugared beer; the shrewd landlord looks on with affected jollity, and hails casual friends with effusive imitation of joy; and last of all "time" is called, and the host of men pour into the street. They are ready for any folly or mischief, and they are all more or less unfitted for the next day's work. Strangely enough, many of those wretched fellows who thus waste time amid sordid surroundings come from refined homes; but music and books and the quiet pleasant talk of mothers and sisters are tame after the delirious rattle of the bar, and thus bright lads go home with their wits dulled and with a complete incapacity for coherent speech. Now let it be remembered that no real friendships are contracted in those odious drinking-shops—something in the very atmosphere of the place seems to induce selfishness, and a drinker who goes wrong is never pitied; when evil days come, the smart landlord shuns the failure, the barmaids sneer at him, and his boon companions shrink away as though the doomed man were tainted. Monstrous it is to hear the remarks made about a lost soul who is plunging with accelerated speed down the steep road to ruin. His companions compare notes about him, and all his bodily symptoms are described with truculent glee in the filthy slang of the bar. So long as the wretch has money he is received with boisterous cordiality, and encouraged to rush yet faster on the way to perdition; his wildest feats in the way of mawkish generosity are applauded; and the very men who drink at his expense go on plucking



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him and laughing at him until the inevitable crash comes. I once heard with a kind of chilled horror a narrative about a fine young man who had died of *delirium tremens*. The narrator giggled so much that his story was often interrupted; but it ran thus—"He was very shaky in the morning, and he began on brandy; he took about six before his hand was steady, and I saw him looking over his shoulder every now and again. In the afternoon a lot of fellows came in, and he stood champagne like water to the whole gang. At six o'clock I wanted him to have a cup of tea, but he said, 'I've had nothing but booze for three days.' Then he got on to the floor, and said he was catching rats—so we knew he'd got 'em on.[1] At night he came out and cleared the street with his sword-bayonet; and it's a wonder he didn't murder somebody. It took two to hold him down all night, and he had his last fit at six in the morning. Died screaming!" A burst of laughter hailed the climax, and then one appreciative friend remarked, "He was a fool—I suppose he was drunk eleven months out of the last twelve." This was the epitaph of a bright young athlete who had been possessed of health, riches, and all fair prospects. No one warned him; none of those who swilled expensive poisons for which he paid ever refused to accept his mad generosity; he was cheered down the road to the gulf by the inane plaudits of the lowest of men; and one who was evidently his companion in many a frantic drinking-bout could find nothing to say but "He was a fool!" At this moment there are thousands of youths in our great towns and cities who are leading the heartless, senseless, semi-delirious life of the bar, and every possible temptation is put in their way to draw them from home, from refinement, from high thoughts, from chaste and temperate modes of life. Horrible it is to hear fine lads talking familiarly about the "jumpy" sensations which they feel in the morning. The "jumps" are those involuntary twitchings which sometimes precede and sometimes accompany *delirium tremens*; the frightful twitching of the limbs is accompanied by a kind of depression that takes the very heart and courage out of a man; and yet no one who travels over these islands can avoid hearing jokes on the dismal subject made by boys who have hardly reached their twenty-fifth year. The bar encourages levity, and the levity is unrelieved by any real gaiety—it is the hysterical feigned merriment of lost souls.

[Footnote 1: This is the elegant public-house mode of describing *delirium tremens*.]

There are bars of a quieter sort, and there are rooms where middle-aged toppers meet, but these are, if possible, more repulsive than the clattering dens frequented by dissipated youths. Stout staid-looking men—fathers of families—gather night after night to sodden themselves quietly, and they make believe that they are enjoying the pleasures of good-fellowship. Curious it is to see how the fictitious assertion of

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goodwill seems to flourish in the atmosphere of the bar and the parlour. Those elderly men who sit and smoke in the places described as “cosy” are woeful examples of the effects of our national curse. They are not riotous; they are only dull, coarse, and silly. Their talk is confused, dogmatic, and generally senseless; and, when they break out into downright foulness of speech, their comparatively silent enjoyment of detestable stories is a thing to make one shiver. Here again good-fellowship is absent. Comfortable tradesmen, prosperous dealers, sharp men who hold good commercial situations, meet to gossip and exchange dubious stories. They laugh a good deal in a restrained way, and they are apparently genial; but the hard selfishness of all is plain to a cool observer. The habit of self-indigence has grown upon them until it pervades their being, and the corruption of the bar subtly envenoms their declining years. If good women could only once hear an evening’s conversation that passes among these elderly citizens, they would be a little surprised. Thoughtful ladies complain that women are not revered in England, and Americans in particular notice with shame the attitude which middle-class Englishmen adopt towards ladies. If the people who complain could only hear how women are spoken of in the homes of Jollity, they would feel no more amazement at a distressing social phenomenon. The talk which is chuckled over by men who have daughters of their own is something to make an inexperienced individual redden. Reverence, nobility, high chivalry, common cleanliness, cannot flourish in the precincts of the bar, and there is not an honest man who has studied with adequate opportunities who will deny that the social glass is too often taken to an accompaniment of sheer uncleanness. Why have not our moral novelists spoken the plain truth about these things? We have many hideous pictures of the East-end drinking-bars, and much reproachful pity is expended on the “residuum;” but the evil that is eating at the very heart of the nation, the evil that is destroying our once noble middle-class, finds no assailant and no chronicler. Were it not for the athletic sports which happily engage the energies of thousands of young men, our middle-class would degenerate with appalling rapidity. But, in spite of athletics, the bar claims its holocaust of manhood year by year, and the professional moralists keep silence on the matter. Some of them say that they cannot risk hurting the sensibilities of innocent maidens. What nonsense! Those maidens all have a chance of becoming the wives of men who have suffered deterioration in the reek and glare of the bar. How many sorrowing wives are now hiding their heart-break and striving to lure their loved ones away from the curse of curses! If the moralists could only look on the mortal pathos of the letters which I receive, they would see that the maidens about whom they are so nervous are the very people who should be summoned as allies in our fight against a universal enemy. If our brave sweet English girls once learn the nature of the temptations to which their brothers and lovers are exposed, they will use every force of their pure souls to save the men whom they can influence from a doom which is death in life.



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*May, 1887.*

### *FRIENDSHIP.*

The memoirs that are now poured into the book-market certainly tend to breed cynicism in the minds of susceptible persons, for it appears that to many eminent men and women of our generation friendship was almost an unknown sentiment. As we read one spiteful paragraph after another, we begin to wonder whether the living men around us resemble the dead purveyors of scandal. The fashionable mode of proceeding nowadays is to leave diaries crammed with sarcasm, give some unhappy friend orders to wait until you are settled in the grave, and then confound your friends and foes by attacks which come to the light long after your ears are deaf to praise and blame. Samuel Wilberforce went into the choicest society that Britain could show; he was the confidant of many people, and he contrived to charm all but a few cross-grained critics. His good humour seemed inexhaustible; and those who saw his cherubic face beaming sweetly on the company at banquets or assemblies fancied that so delightful a man was never known before. But this suave, unctuous gentleman, who fascinated every one, from Queen to cottager, spent a pretty fair share of his life in writing vicious witticisms and scandals concerning the folk with whom he seemed to be on affectionate terms. At nights, after spending his days in working and bowing and smiling and winning the hearts of men, he went home and poured out all the venom that was in his heart. When his memoirs appeared, all the most select social circles in the country were driven into a serious flutter. No one was spared; and, as some of the statements made by Wilberforce were, to say the least, a little sweeping, a violent paper warfare began, which has hardly ceased raging even now. Happy and contented men who believed that the Bishop loved and admired them were surprised to find that he had disliked and despised them. Moreover, the naughty diarist had an ugly habit of recording men's private conversations; and thus a good many sayings which should have been kept secret became public property. A very irreverent wag wrote—

How blest was he who'd ne'er consent  
With Wilberforce to walk,  
Nor dined with Soapy Sam, nor let  
The Bishop hear him talk!

and this crude epigram expressed the feelings of numbers of enraged and scandalized individuals. The wretched book gave us an ugly picture of a hollow society where kindness seemed non-existent, and where every man walked with his head in a cloud of poisonous flies. As more memoirs appeared, it was most funny to observe that, while Wilberforce was occupied in scarifying his dear friends, some of his dear friends were occupied in scarifying him. Thus we find Abraham Hayward, a polished leader of society, writing in the following way of Wilberforce, with whom ostensibly his relations were of the most affectionate description—"Wilberforce is really a low fellow. Again and again the committee of the Athenaeum Club have been obliged to reprove him for his

vulgar selfishness.” This is dreadful! No wonder that petty cynics snarl and rejoice; they say, “Look at your great men, and see what mean backbiters they are!” Alas!



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Thomas Carlyle's memoirs are a kind of graveyard of reputations; and we can well understand the rage and horror with which many individuals protested against the fierce Scotchman's strictures. In the hearts of thousands of noble young people Carlyle's memory was cherished like that of some dear saint; and it was terrible to find that the strong prophet had been penetrated by such a virus of malice. Carlyle met all the best men and women in England; but the only ones whom he did not disparage were Tennyson, the Duke of Wellington, Mr. Froude, and Emerson. He could not talk even of Charles Darwin without calling him an imbecile; and his all-round hitting at his closest intimates is simply merciless. The same perversity which made him talk of Keats's "maudlin weak-eyed sensibility" caused him to describe his loyal, generous, high-bred friend Lord Houghton as a "nice little robin-redbreast of a man;" while Mrs. Basil Montagu, who cheered him and spared no pains to aid him in the darkest times, is now immortalized by one masterly venomous paragraph. Carlyle was great—very great—but really the cultivation of loyal friendships seems hardly to have been in his line. Men who know his works by heart, and who derived their noblest inspiration from him, cannot bear to read his memoirs twice over, for it sadly appears as though the Titan had defiled the very altar of friendship.

What shall we say of the cunning cat-like Charles Greville, who crept on tiptoe through the world, observing and recording the littleness of men? His stealthy eye missed nothing; and the men whom he flattered and used little thought that the wizened dandy who pleased them with his old-world courtesy was chronicling their weakness and baseness for all time. A nobly patriotic Ministry came before the world with a flourish of trumpets, and declared that England must fight Russia in defence of public law, freedom, and other holy things. But the wicked diarist had watched the secret proceedings of his dear friends; and he informs us that those beloved intimates were all sound asleep when a single Minister decided on the movement which cost us forty thousand men and one hundred millions of treasure. That close sly being used—to worm out the secrets of men's innermost hearts; and his impassive mask never showed a sign of emotion. To illustrate his mode of extracting the information of which he made such terrible use, I may tell one trivial anecdote which has never before been made public. When Greville was very old, he went to see a spiritualistic "medium" who was attracting fashionable London. The charlatan looked at the gray worn old man and thought himself safe; four other visitors attended the *seance*, but the "medium" bestowed all his attention on Greville. With much emotion he cried, "There is an aged lady behind your chair!" Greville remarked sweetly, "How interesting!" "She is very, very like you!" "Who can it be?" murmured Greville. "She lifts her hands to bless you. Her hands



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are now resting over your head!" shouted the medium; and the pallid emotionless man said, with a slight tremor in his voice, "Pray tell me who this mysterious visitant may be!" "It is your mother." "Oh," said Greville, "I am delighted to hear that!" "She says she is perfectly happy, and she watches you constantly." "Dear soul!" muttered the imperturbable one. "She tells me you will join her soon, and be happy with her." Then Greville said gravely, in dulcet tones, "That is extremely likely, for I am going to take tea with her at five o'clock!" He had led on the poor swindler in his usual fashion; and he never hinted at the fact that his mother was nearly a century old. His friends were "pumped" in the same subtle manner; and the immortally notorious memoirs are strewn with assassinated characters.

As we study the phenomena indicated by these memoirs, we begin to wonder whether friendship is or is not extinct. Men are gregarious, and flocks of them meet together at all hours of the day and night. They exchange conventional words of greeting, they wear happy smiles, they are apparently cordial and charming' one with another; and yet a rigidly accurate observer may look mournfully for signs of real friendship. How can it exist? The men and women who pass through the whirl of a London season cannot help regarding their fellow-creatures rather as lay figures than as human beings. They go to crowded balls and seething "receptions," not to hold any wise human converse, but only to be able to say that they were in such and such a room on a certain night. The glittering crowds fleet by like shadows, and no man has much chance of knowing his neighbour's heart.

How fast the flitting figures come—  
The mild, the fierce, the stony face;  
Some bright with thoughtless smiles, and some  
Where secret tears have left their trace!

Ah, it is only the faces that the tired pleasure-seeker sees and knows; the real comrade, the human soul, is hidden away behind the mask!

Genuine heroic friendship cannot flourish in an artificial society; and that perhaps accounts for the fact that the curled darlings of our modern community spend much of their leisure in reading papers devoted to tattle and scandal. It seems as though the search after pleasure poisoned the very sources of nobleness in the nature of men. In our monstrous city a man may live without a quarrel for forty years; he may be popular, he may be received with genial greetings wherever he goes—and yet he has no friend. He lingers through his little day; and, when he passes away, the change is less heeded than would be the removal of a chair from a club smoking-room. When I see the callous indifference with which illness, misfortune, and death are regarded by the dainty classes, I can scarcely wonder when irate philosophers denounce polite society as a

pestilent and demoralizing nuisance. Among the people airily and impudently called “the

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lower orders" noble friendships are by no means uncommon. "I can't bear that look on your face, Bill. I'm coming to save you or go with you!" said a rough sailor as he sprang into a raging sea to help his shipmate. "I'm coming, old fellow!" shouted the mate of a merchant-vessel; and he dived overboard among the mountainous seas that were rolling south of Cape Horn one January. For an hour this hero fought with the blinding water, and he saved his comrade at last. Strange to say, the lounging impassive dandies who regard the universe with a yawn, and who sneer at the very notion of friendship, develop the kindly and manly virtues when they are removed from the enervating atmosphere of Society and forced to lead a hard life. A man to whom emotion, passion, self-sacrifice, are things to be mentioned with a curl of the lip, departs on a campaign, and amid squalor, peril, and grim horrors he becomes totally unselfish. Men who have watched our splendid military officers in the field are apt to think that a society which converts such generous souls into self-seeking fribbles must be merely poisonous. The more we study the subject the more clearly we can see that where luxury flourishes friendship withers. In the vast suffering Russian nation friendships are at this very moment cherished to the heroic pitch. A mighty people are awakening, as it were, from sleep; the wicked and corrupt still sit in high places, but among the weltering masses of the populace purity and nobleness are spreading, and such friendships are fostered as never have been shadowed forth in story or song. Sophie Peroffsky mounts the scaffold with four other doomed mortals; she never thinks of her own approaching agony—she only longs to comfort her friends and she kisses them and greets them with cheering words until the last dread moment arrives. Poor little Marie Soubotine—sweetest of perverted children, noblest of rebels—refuses to purchase her own safety by uttering a word to betray her sworn friend. For three years she lingers on in an underground dungeon, and then she is sent on the wild road to Siberia; she dies amid gloom and deep suffering, but no torture can unseal her lips; she gladly gives her life to save another's. Antonoff endures the torture, but no agony can make him prove false to his friends. When his captors give him a respite from the thumbscrews and the red-hot wires that are thrust under his nails, he forgets his own torment, and scratches on his plate his cipher signals to his comrades. Those men and women in that awful country are lawless and dangerous, but they are heroic, and they are true friends one to another.



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How far we proud islanders must have forsaken for a time the road to nobleness when we are able to exalt the saying "A full purse is the only true friend" into a representative English proverb! We do not rage and foam as Timon did—that would be ill-bred and ludicrous; we simply smile and utter delicate mockeries. In the plays that best please our golden youth nothing is so certain to win applause and laughter as a sentence about the treachery or greed of friends. Do those grinning, superlatively insolent cynics really represent the mighty Mother of Nations? Ah, no! If even the worst of them were thrust away into some region where life was hard for him, he would show something like nobility and manliness; it is the mephitic airs of ease and luxury that breed selfishness and scorn in his soul. At any rate, those effeminate people are not typical specimens of our steadfast friendly race. When the folk in the colliery village hear that deadly thud and feel the shudder of the earth which tell of disaster, Jack the hewer rushes to the pit's mouth and joins the search-party. He knows that the gas may grip him by the throat, and that the heavy current of dissolution may creep through his veins; but his mate is down there in the workings, and he must needs save him or die in the attempt. Greater love hath no man than this. Ah, yes—the poor collier is indeed ready to lay down his life for his friend! The fiery soldier, William Beresford, sees a comrade in peril; a horde of infuriated savages are rushing up, and there is only one pony to carry the two Englishmen. Beresford calls, "Jump up behind me!" but the friend answers, "No; save yourself! I can die, and I won't risk your life." Then the undignified but decidedly gallant Beresford observes, "If you don't come, I'll punch your head!" The pony canters heavily off; one stumble would mean death, but the dauntless fighting man brings in his friend safely, though only by the skin of his teeth. It is absolutely necessary for the saving of our moral health that we should turn away from the dreary flippancy of an effete society to such scenes as those. If we regarded only the pampered classes, then we might well think that true human fellowship had perished, and a starless darkness—worse almost than Atheism—would fall on the soul. But we are not all corrupt, and the strong brave heart of our people still beats true. Young men cherish manly affection for friends, and are not ashamed to show it; sweet girls form friendships that hold until the maidens become matrons and till the shining locks have turned to silver white. Wherever men are massed together the struggle for existence grows keen, and selfishness and cynicism thrust up their rank growths. "Pleasure" blunts the moral sense and converts the natural man into a noxious being; but happily our people are sound at the core, and it will be long ere cynicism and corruption are universal. The great healthy middle-class is made up of folk who would regard a writer of spiteful memoirs



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as a mere bravo; they have not perhaps the sweetness and light which Mr. Arnold wished to bestow on them, but at any rate they have a certain rough generosity, and they have also a share of that self-forgetfulness which alone forms the basis of friendship. Having that, they can do without Carlyle's learning and Wilberforce's polish, and they can certainly do without the sour malice of the historian and the prelate.

*July, 1887.*

### *DISASTERS AT SEA.*

During last year the register of slaughter on the ocean was worse than any ever before seen since the *Royal Charter* took her crew to destruction; and it seems as though matters were growing worse and worse. One dismal old story is being repeated week in, week out. In thick weather or clear weather—it does not seem to matter which—two vessels approach each other, and the presiding officers on board of each are quite satisfied and calm; then, on a sudden, one vessel shifts her course, there are a few hurried and maddened ejaculations, and then comes a crash. After that, the ugly tale may be continued in the same terms over and over again; the boats cannot be cleared away, the vessels drift apart, and both founder, or one is left crippled. I shall have something to say about the actual effects of a collision presently, but I may first go on to name some other kinds of disaster. A heavy sea is rolling, and occasionally breaking, and a vessel is lumbering along from crest to hollow of the rushing seas; a big wall of water looms over her for a second, and then comes crashing down; the deck gives way—there are no water-tight compartments—and the ship becomes suddenly as unmanageable as a mere cask in a seaway. Again, a plate is wrenched, and some villainously-made rivets jump out of their places like buttons from an over-tight bodice; in ten minutes the vessel is wallowing, ready for her last plunge; and very likely the crew have not even the forlorn chance of taking to the boats. Once more—on a clear night in the tropics an emigrant ship is stealing softly through the water; the merry crowd on deck has broken up, the women, poor creatures, are all locked up in their quarters, and only a few men remain to lounge and gossip. The great stars hang like lamps from the solemn dome of the sky, and the ripples are painted with exquisite serpentine streaks; the wind hums softly from the courses of the sails, and some of the men like to let the cool breeze blow over them. Everything seems so delightfully placid and clear that the thought of danger vanishes; no one would imagine that even a sea-bird could come up unobserved over that starlit expanse of water. But the ocean is treacherous in light and shade. The loungers tell their little stories and laugh merrily; the officer of the watch carelessly stumps forward from abreast of the wheel, looks knowingly aloft, twirls round like a teetotum, and stumps back again; and the sweet night passes in splendour, until all save one or two



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home-sick lingerers are happy. It never occurs to any of these passengers to glance forward and see whether a streak of green fire seems to strike out from the starboard—the right-hand side of the vessel—or whether a shaft of red shoots from the other side. As a matter of fact, the vessel is going on like a dark cloud over the flying furrows of the sea; but there is very little of the cloud about her great hull, for she would knock a house down if she hit it when travelling at her present rate. The captain is a thrifty man, and the owners are thrifty persons; they consider the cost of oil; and thus, as it is a nice clear night, the side-lights are not lit, and the judgment of the tramping look-out man on the forecastle-head is trusted. Parenthetically I may say that, without being in any way disposed to harbour exaggerated sentiment, I feel almost inclined to advocate death for any sailor who runs in mid-ocean without carrying his proper lights out. I once saw a big iron barque go grinding right from the bulge of the bow to the stern of an ocean steamer—and that wretched barque had no lights. Half a yard's difference, and both vessels would have sunk. Three hundred and fifty people were sleeping peacefully on board the steamer, and the majority of them must have gone down, while those who were saved would have had a hard time in the boats. Strange to say, that very same steamer was crossed by another vessel which carried no lights: but this time the result was bad, for the steamer went clean through the other ship and sank her instantly.

To return to the emigrant vessel. The officer continues his tramp like one of the caged animals of a menagerie; the spare man of the watch leans against the rail and hums—

We'll go no more by the light of the moon;  
The song is done, and we've lost the tune,  
So I'll go no more a-roving with you, fair maid—  
A-roving, A-roving, &c.

—the pipes glow in the clear air, and the flying water bubbles and moans. Oh, yes, all is well—beautifully well—and we need no lights whatever! Then the look-out man whistles “Hist!”—which is quite an unusual mode of signalling; the officer ceases his monotonous tramp and runs forward. “Luff a little!” “He’s still bearing up. Why doesn’t he keep away?” “Luff a little more! Stand by your lee-braces. Oh, he’ll go clear!” So the low clear talk goes, till at last with a savage yell of rage a voice comes from the other vessel —“Where you coming to?” “Hard down with it!” “He’s into us!” “Clear away your boats!” Then there is a sound like “smack.” Then comes a long scraunch, and a thunderous rattle of blocks; a sail goes with a report like a gun; the vessels bump a few times, and then one draws away, leaving the other with bows staved in. A wild clamour surges up from below, but there is no time to heed that; the men toil like Titans, and the hideous music of prayers and curses disturbs the night.

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Then the vessel that was hit amidships rolls a little, and there is a gurgle like that of an enormous, weir: a mast goes with a sharp report; a man's figure appears on the taffrail and bounds far into the sea—it is an experienced hand who wants to escape the down-draught; the hull shudders, grows steady, and then with one lurch the ship swashes down and the bellowing vortex throws up huge sprays of boiling spray. A few stray swimmers are picked up, but the rest of the company will be seen nevermore. Fancy those women in that darkened steerage! Think of it, and then say what should be done to an owner who stints his officers in the matter of lamp-oil; or to a captain who does not use what the owner provides! The huddled victims wake from confused slumbers; some scream—some become insane on the instant; the children add their shrill clamour to the mad rout; and the water roars in. Then the darkness grows thick, and the agonized crowd tear and throttle each other in fierce terror; and then approaches the slowly-coming end. Oh, how often—how wearily often—have such scenes been enacted on the face of this fair world! And all to save a little lamp-oil!

Yet again—a great vessel plunges away to sea bearing a precious freight of some one thousand souls. Perhaps the owners reckon the cargo in the hold as being worth more than the human burden; but of course opinions differ. The wild rush from one border of the ocean to the other goes on for a few days and nights, and the tremendous structure of steel cleaves the hugest waves as though they were but clouds. Down below the luxurious passengers live in their fine hotel, and the luckier ones are quite happy and ineffably comfortable. If a sunny day breaks, then the pallid battalions in the steerage come up to the air, and the ship's deck is like a long animated street. A thousand souls, we said? True! Now let some quiet observant man of the sailorly sort go round at night and count the boats. Twelve, and the gig aft makes thirteen! Allowing a tremendously large average, this set of boats might actually carry six hundred persons; but the six hundred would need to sit very carefully even in smooth water, and a rush might capsize any one boat.

The vast floating hotel spins on at twenty miles an hour—a speed that might possibly shame some of the railways that run from London suburbs—and the officers want to save every yard. No care is omitted; three men are on the bridge at night, there is a starboard look-out, a port look-out, and the quartermaster patrols amidships and sees that the masthead light is all right. The officer and the look-out men pass the word every half-hour, and nothing escapes notice. If some unlucky steerage passenger happens to strike a light forward, he stands a very good chance of being put in irons; and, if there is a patient in the deck-house, the windows must be darkened with thick cloths. Each officer, on hazy nights, improvises a sort of hood for himself; and he peers forward as



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if life depended on his eyesight—as indeed it does. But there comes a bright evening, and the monster liner’s journey is all but over; three hours more of steaming and she will be safe. A little schooner comes skimming up on the port side—and the schooner is to the liner as a chip is to a tree-trunk. The schooner holds on her course, for she is not bound to give way at all; but the officer on the bridge of the steamer thinks, “I shall lose a quarter of an hour if I edge away to starboard and let him fall astern of us. I shall keep right on and shave his bows.” The liner is going at nineteen knots, the schooner is romping along at eight—yet the liner cannot clear the little vessel. There comes a fresh gust of wind; the sailing vessel lies over to it, and just touches the floating hotel amidships—but the touch is enough to open a breach big enough for a coach and four to go through. The steamer’s head is laid for the land and every ounce of steam is put on, but she settles and settles more and more. And now what about the thirteen boats for a thousand people? There is a wild scuffling, wild outcry. Women bite their lips and try, with divine patience, to crush down all appearance of fear, and to keep their limbs from trembling; some unruly fellows are kept in check only by terror of the revolver; and the officers remember that their fair name and their hope of earthly redemption are at stake. In one case of this sort it took three mortal hours to ferry the passengers and crew over smooth water to the rescuing vessel; and those rescued folk may think themselves the most fortunate of all created souls, for, if the liner had been hit with an impetus of a few more tons, very few on board of her would have lived to tell the tale. Unless passengers, at the risk of being snubbed and threatened, criticise the boat accommodation of great steamers, there will be such a disaster one day as will make the world shudder.

The pitiful thing is to know how easily all this might be prevented. Until one has been on board a small vessel which has every spar, bolt, iron, and plank sound, one can have no idea how perfectly safe a perfectly-built ship is in any sort of weather. A schooner of one hundred and fifty tons was caught in a hurricane which was so powerful that the men had to hang on where they could, even before the flattened foaming sea rose from its level rush and began to come on board. All round were vessels in distress; the scare caused many of the seamen to forget their lights, and the ships lumbered on, first to collision, and then to that crashing plunge which takes all hands down. The little schooner was actually obliged to offer assistance to a big mail-steamer—and yet she might have been rather easily carried by that same steamer. But the little vessel’s lights were watched with sedulous care; the blasts might tear at her scanty canvas, but there was not a rag or a rope that would give way; and, although the awful rush of the gale carried her within eight miles of



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a rocky lee-shore, her captain had sufficient confidence in the goodness of his gear to begin sailing his ship instead of keeping her hove to. One rope faulty, one light wrong, one hand out of his place at the critical time, and the bones of a pleasant ship's company would have been strewn on a bleak shore: but everything was right, and the tiny craft drew away like a seagull when she was made to sail. Of course the sea ran clean over her, but she forged quietly on until she was thirty miles clear of those foaming breakers that roared on the cliffs. During that night more good seamen were drowned than one would like to number; ships worth a king's ransom were utterly lost. And why? Simply because they had not the perfect gear which saved the little schooner. Even had the little craft been sent over until she refused to rise again to the sea, the boats were ready, and everybody on board had a good chance. Care first of all is needed, and then fear may be banished. The smart agent reads his report glibly to the directors of a steamboat company—and yet I have seen such smart agents superintending the departure of vessels whereof the appearance was enough to make a good judge quake for the safety of crew and cargo.

What do I advise? Well, in the first place, I must remind shoregoing folk that a sound well-found vessel will live through anything. Let passengers beware of lines which pay a large dividend and show nothing on their balance-sheets to allow for depreciation. In the next place, if any passenger on a long voyage should see that the proper lights are not shown, he ought to wake up his fellow passengers at any hour of the night, and go with his friends to threaten the captain. Never mind bluster or oaths—merely say, "If your lights are not shown, you may regard your certificate as gone." If that does not bring the gentleman to his senses, nothing will. Again, take care in any case that no raw foreign seamen are allowed to go on the look-out in any vessel, for a misunderstood shout at a critical moment may bring sudden doom on hundreds of unsuspecting fellow-creatures. Above all, see that the water-casks in every boat are kept full. In this way the sea tragedies may be a little lessened in their hateful number.

*March, 1889.*

### *A RHAPSODY OF SUMMER.*

There came into my life a time of strenuous effort, and I drank all the joys of labour to the lees. When the rich dark midnights of summer drooped over the earth, I could hardly bear to think of the hours of oblivion which must pass ere I felt the delight of work once more. And the world seemed very beautiful; and, when I looked up to the solemn sky, so sweetly sown with stars, I could see stirring words like "Fame" and "Gladness" and "Triumph" written dimly across the vault; so that my heart was full of rejoicing, and all the world promised fair. In those immortal midnights the sea spoke wonderful things to me, and the long rollers glittering under the high moon bore



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health and bright promise as they hastened to the shore. And, when the ships stole—oh, so silently!—out of the shadows and moved over the diamond track of the moon's light, I sent my heart out to the lonely seamen and prayed that they might be joyous like me. Then the ringing of the song of multitudinous birds sounded in the hours of dawn, and the tawny-throated king of songsters made my pulses tremble with his wild ecstasy; and the blackbird poured forth mellow defiance, and the thrush shrilled in his lovely fashion concerning the joy of existence.

Pass, dreams! The long beams are drawn from the bosom of dawn. The gray of the quiet sea quickens into rose, and soon the glittering serpentine streaks of colour quiver into a blaze; the brown sands glow, and the little waves run inward, showing milky curves under the gay light; the shoregoing boats come home, and their sails—those coarse tanned sails—are like flowers that wake with the daisies and the peonies to feast on the sun. Happy holiday-makers who are wise enough to watch the fishers come in! The booted thickly-clad fellows plunge into the shallow water; and then the bare-footed women come down, and the harvest of the night is carried up the cliffs before the most of the holiday-folk have fairly awakened. The proud day broadens to its height, and the sands are blackened by the growing crowd; for the beach near a fashionable watering-place is like a section cut from a turbulent city street, save that the folk on the sands think of aught but business. I have never been able to sympathize with those who can perceive only vulgarity in a seaside crowd. It is well to care for deserted shores and dark moaning forests in the far North; but the average British holiday-maker is a sociable creature; he likes to feel the sense of companionship, and his spirits rise in proportion to the density of the crowd amid which he disports himself. To me, the life, the concentrated enjoyment, the ways of the children who are set free from the trammels of town life, are all like so much poetry. I learned early to rejoice in silent sympathy with the rejoicing of God's creatures. Only to watch the languid pose of some steady toiler from the City is enough to give discontented people a goodly lesson. The man has been ground in the mill for a year; his modest life has left him no time for enjoyment, and his ideas of all pleasure are crude. Watch him as he remains passively in an ecstasy of rest. The cries of children, the confused jargon of the crowd, fall but faintly on his nerves; he likes the sensation of being in company; he has a dim notion of the beauty of the vast sky with its shining snowy-bosomed clouds, and he lets the light breeze blow over him. I like to look on that good citizen and contrast the dull round of his wayfarings on many streets with the ease and satisfaction of his attitude on the sands. Then the night comes. The dancers are busy, the commonplace music is made refined by distance, and



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the murmur of the sea gathers power over all other sounds, until the noon of night arrives and the last merry voices are heard no more. Poor harmless revellers, so condemned by men whose round of life is a search for pleasure! Many of you do not understand or care for quiet refinements of dress and demeanour; you lack restraint; but I have felt much gladness while demurely watching your abandonment. I could draw rest for my soul from the magnetic night long after you were weary and asleep; but much of my pleasure came as a reflection from yours.

As my memories of sweetness—yes, and of purifying sadness—gather more thickly, I am minded to wonder that so much has been vouchsafed me rather than to mourn over shadowy might-have-beens. The summer day by the deep lovely lake—the lake within sound of the sea! All round the steep walls that shut in the dark glossy water there hung rank festoons and bosses of brilliant green, and the clear reflections of the weeds and flowers hung so far down in the mysterious deeps that the height of the rocky wall seemed stupendous. Far over in one tremendously deep pool the lazy great fish wallowed and lunged; they would not show their speckled sides very much until the evening; but they kept sleepily moving all day, and sometimes a mighty back would show like a log for an instant. In the morning the modest ground-larks cheeped softly among the rough grasses on the low hills, while the proud heaven-scaler—the lordly kinsman of the ground-lark—filled the sky with his lovely clamour. Sometimes a water-rail would come out from the sedges and walk on the surface of the lake as a tiny ostrich might on the shifting sand; pretty creatures of all sorts seemed to find their homes near the deep wonderful water, and the whole morning might be passed in silently watching the birds and beasts that came around. The gay sun made streams of silver fire shoot from the polished brackens and sorrel, the purple geraniums gleamed like scattered jewels, and the birds seemed to be joyful in presence of that manifold beauty—joyful as the quiet human being who watched them all. And the little fishes in the shallows would have their fun as well. They darted hither and thither; the spiny creatures which the schoolboy loves built their queer nests among the waterweeds; and sometimes a silly adventurer—alarmed by the majestic approach of a large fish—would rush on to the loamy bank at the shallow end of the lake and wriggle piteously in hopeless failure. The afternoons were divinely restful by the varied shores of the limpid lake. Sometimes as the sun sloped there might come hollow blasts of wind that had careered for a brief space over the woods; but the brooding heat, the mastering silence, the feeling that multifarious quiescent living things were ready to start into action, all took the senses with somnolence. That drowsy joy, that soothing silence which seemed only intensified by the murmur of bees and the faint gurgle of water, were like medicine to the soul; and it seemed that the conception of Nirvana became easily understood as the delicious open-air reverie grew more and more involved and vague. Then the last look of the sun, the creeping shadows that made the sea gray and turned the little lake to an inky hue, and then the slow fall of the quiet-coloured evening, and, last, the fall of the mystic night!



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Poor little birds, moving uneasily in the darkness, threw down tiny fragments from the rocks, and each fragment fell with a sound like the clink of a delicate silver bell; softly the sea moaned, softly the night-wind blew, and softly—so softly!—came whispering the spirits of the dead. Joyous faces could be seen by that lake long, long ago. In summer, when the lower rim was all blazing with red and yellow flowers, young lovers came to whisper and gaze. They are dead and gone. In winter, when the tarn was covered with jetty glossy ice, there were jovial scenes whereof the jollity was shared by a happy few. Round and round on the glossy surface the skaters flew and passed like gliding ghosts under the gloom of the rocks; the hiss of the iron sounded musically, and the steep wall flung back sharp echoes of harmless laughter. Each volume of sound was magically magnified, and the gay company carried on their pleasant outing far into the chili winter night. They are all gone! One was there oftenest in spring and summer, and the last sun-rays often made her golden hair shine in splendour as she stood gazing wistfully over the solemn lake. She saw wonders there that coarser spirits could not know; and all her gentle musings passed into poetry—poetry that was seldom spoken. Those who loved her never cared to break her sacred stillness as she pondered by the side of the beloved tarn; her language was not known to common folk, for she held high converse with the great of old time; and, when she chanced to speak with me, I understood but dimly, though I had all the sense of beauty and mystery. A shipwrecked sailor said she looked as if she belonged to God. Her Master claimed her early. Dear, your yellow hair will shine no more in the sun that you loved; you have long given over your day-dreams—and you are now dreamless. Or perhaps you dwell amid the silent glory of one last long dream of those you loved. The gorse on the moor moans by your grave, the brackens grow green and tall and wither into dead gold year by year, the lake gleams gloomily in fitful flashes amid its borders of splendour; and you rest softly while the sea calls your lullaby nightly. Far off, far off, my soul, by quiet seas where the lamps of the Southern Cross hang in the magnificence of the purple sky, there is one who remembers the lake, and the glassy ice, and the blaze of pompous summer, and the shining of that yellow hair. Peace—oh, peace! The sorrow has passed into quiet pensive regret that is nigh akin to gladness.

How many other ineffable days and nights have I known? All who can feel the thrilling of sea-winds, all who can have even one day amid grass and fair trees, grasp the time of delight, enjoy all beauties, do not pass in coarseness one single minute; and then, when the Guide comes to point your road through the strange gates, you may be like me—you may repine at nothing, for you will have much good to remember and scanty evil. It is good for me now to think



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of the thundering rush of the yacht as, with the great mainsail drawing heavily, she roared through the field of foam made by her own splendid speed, while the inky waves on the dim horizon moaned and the dark summer midnight brooded warmly over the dark sea. It is good to think of the strange days when the vessel was buried in wreaths of dark cloud, and the rush of the wind only drove the haze screaming among the shrouds. The vast dim mountains might not be pleasant to the eye of either seaman or landsman; but, when they poured their thundering deluge on a strong safe deck, we did not mind them. Happy hearts were there even in stormy warring afternoons; and men watched quite placidly as the long grim hills came gliding on. Then in the evenings there were chance hours when the dim fore-castle was a pleasant place in bad weather. The bow of the vessel swayed wildly; the pitching seemed as if it might end in one immense supreme dive to the gulf, and the mad storming of the wind forced us to utter our simple talk in loudest tones. Gruff kindly phrases, without much wit or point, were good enough for us; perhaps even the appalling dignitary—yes, even the mate—would crawl in; and we listened to lengthy disjointed stories. And all the while the tremendous howl of the storm went on, and the merry lads who went out on duty had to rush wildly so as to reach the alley when a very heavy sea came over. The sense of strength was supreme; the crash of the gale was nothing; and we rather hugged ourselves on the notion that the fierce screaming meant us no harm. The curls of smoke flitted softly amid the blurred yellow beams from the lamp, and our chat went on while the monstrous billows grew blacker and blacker and the spray shone like corpse-candles on the mystic and mighty hills. And then the hours of the terrible darkness! To leave the swept deck while every vein tingled with the ecstasy of the gale! The dull warmth below was exquisite; the sly creatures which crept from their dens and let the lamplight shine on their weird eyes—even the gamesome rats—had something merrily diabolic about them. Their thuds on the floor, their sordid swarming, their inexplicable daring—all gave a kind of minor current of *diablerie* to the rush and hurry of the stormy night; for they seemed to speak—and the creatures which on shore are odious appeared to be quite in place in the soaring groaning vessel. Ah, my brave fore-castle lads, my merry tan-faced favourites, I shall no more see your quaint squalor, I shall no more see your battle with wind and savage waves and elemental turmoil! Some of you have passed to the shadows before me; some of you have only the ooze for your graves; and the others cannot ever hear my greeting again on the sweet mornings when the waves are all gay with lily-hued blossoms of foam.

Pale beyond porch and portal,  
Crowned with dark flowers she stands,  
Who gathers all things mortal  
With cold immortal hands.



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Gathers! And Proserpina will strew the flowers of foam that I may never see more—and then she will gather me.

All was good in the time of delight—all is good now that only a memory clings lovingly to the heart. Take my counsel. Rejoice in your day, and the night shall carry no dread for you.

*June, 1889.*

*LOST DAYS.*

I fully recognize the fact which the Frenchman flippantly stated—that no human beings really believe that death is inevitable until the last clasp of the stone-cold king numbs their pulses. Perhaps this insensibility is a merciful gift; at any rate, it is a fact. If belief came home with violence to our minds, we should suffer from a sort of vertigo; but the merciful dullness which the Frenchman perceived and mocked in his epigram saves us all the miseries of apprehension. This is very curiously seen among soldiers when they know that they must soon go into action. The soldiers chat together on the night before the attack; they know that some of them must go down; they actually go so far as to exchange messages thus—“If anything happens to me, you know, Bill, I want you to take that to the old people. You give me a note or anything else you have; and, if we get out of the shindy, we can hand the things back again.” After confidences of this sort, the men chat on; and I never yet knew or heard of one who did not speak of his own safe return as a matter of course. When a brigade charges, there may be a little anxiety at first; but the whistle of the first bullet ends all misgivings, and the fellows grow quite merry, though it may be that half of them are certain to be down on the ground before the day is over. A man who is struck may know well that he will pass away: but he will rise up feebly to cheer on his comrades—nay, he will ask questions, as the charging troops pass him, as to the fate of Bill or Joe, or the probable action of the Heavies, or similar trifles.

In the fight of life we all behave much as the soldiers do in the crash and hurry of battle. If we reason the matter out with a semblance of logic, we all know that we must move toward the shadows; but, even after we are mortally stricken by disease or age, we persist in acting and thinking as if there were no end. In youth we go almost further; we are too apt to live as though we were immortal, and as though there were absolutely nothing to result from human action or human inaction. To the young man and the young woman the future is not a blind lane with a grave at the end; it is a spacious plain reaching away towards a far-off horizon; and that horizon recedes and recedes as they move forward, leaving magnificent expanses to be crossed in joyous freedom. A pretty delusion! The youth harks onward, singing merrily and rejoicing in sympathy with the mystic song of the birds; there is so much space around him—the very breath of life is a joy—and he is content to taste in glorious idleness the ecstasy of living. The



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evening closes in, and then the horizon seems to be narrowing; like the walls of the deadly chamber in the home of the Inquisition, the skies shrink inward—and the youth has misgivings. The next day finds his plain shrunken a little in expanse, and his horizon has not so superb a sweep. Nevertheless he goes gaily on, and once more he raises his voice joyously, and tries to think that the plain and the horizon can contract no more. Thus in foolish hopefulness he passes his days until the glorious plain of his dreams has been traversed, and, lo, under his very feet is the great gulf fixed, and far below the tide—the tide of Eternity—laps sullenly against the walls of the deadly chasm. If the youth knew that the gulf and the rolling river were so near—if he not only knew, but could absolutely picture his doom—would he be so merry? Ah, no!

I repeat that, if men could be so disciplined as to believe in their souls that death must come, then there would be no lost days. Is there one of us who can say that he never lost a day amid this too brief, too joyous, too entrancing term of existence? Not one. The aged Roman—who, by-the-way, was somewhat of a prig—used to go about moaning, “I have lost a day,” if he thought he had not performed some good action or learned something in the twenty-four hours. Most of us have no such qualms; we waste the time freely; and we never know that it is wasted until with a dull shock we comprehend that all must be left and that the squandered hours can never be retrieved. The men who are strongest and greatest and best suffer the acutest remorse for the lost days; they know their own powers, and that very knowledge makes them suffer all the more bitterly when they reckon up what they might have done and compare it with the sum of their actual achievement.

In a certain German town a little cell is shown on the walls of which a famous name is marked many times. It appears that in his turbulent youth Prince Bismarck was often a prisoner in this cell; and his various appearances are registered under eleven different dates. Moreover, I observe from the same rude register that he fought twenty-eight duels. Lost days—lost days! He tells us how he drank in the usual insane fashion prevalent among the students. He “cannot tell how much Burgundy he could really drink.” Lost days—lost days! And now the great old man, with Europe at his feet and the world awaiting his lightest word with eagerness, turns regretfully sometimes to think of the days thrown away. A haze seems to hang before the eyes of such as he; and it is a haze that makes the future seem dim and vast, even while it obscures all the sharp outlines of things. The child is not capable of reasoning coherently, and therefore its disposition to fritter away time must be regarded as only the result of defective organization; but the young man and young woman can reason, and yet we find them perpetually making excuses for eluding



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time and eternity. Look at the young fellows who are preparing for the hard duties of life by studying at a University. Here is one who seems to have recognized the facts of existence; his hours are arranged as methodically as his heart beats; he knows the exact balance between physical and intellectual strength, and he overtaxes neither, but body and mind are worked up to the highest attainable pressure. No pleasures of the destructive sort call this youngster aside; he has learned already what it is to reap the harvest of a quiet eye, and his joys are of the sober kind. He rises early, and he has got far through his work ere noon; his quiet afternoon is devoted to harmless merriment in the cricket-field or on the friendly country roads, and his evening is spent without any vain gossip in the happy companionship of his books. That young man loses no day; but unhappily he represents a type which is but too rare. The steady man, economic of time, is a rarity; but the wild youth who is always going to do something to-morrow is one of a class that numbers only too many on its rolls. To-morrow! The young fellow passes to-day on the river, or spends it in lounging or in active dissipation. He feels that he is doing wrong; but the gaunt spectres raised by conscience are always exorcised by the bright vision of to-morrow. To-morrow the truant will go to his books; he will bend himself for that concentrated effort which alone secures success, and his time of carelessness and sloth shall be far left behind. But the sinister influence of to-day saps his will and renders him infirm; each new to-day is wasted amid thoughts of visionary to-morrows which take all the power from his soul; and, when he is nerveless, powerless, tired, discontented with the very sight of the sun, he finds suddenly that his feet are on the edge of the gulf, and he knows that there will be no more to-morrows.

I am not entering a plea for hard, petrifying work. If a man is a hand-worker or brain-worker, his fate is inevitable if he regards work as the only end of life. The loss of which I speak is that incurred by engaging in pursuits which do not give mental strength or resource or bodily health. The hard-worked business-man who gallops twenty miles after hounds before he settles to his long stretch of toil is not losing his day; the empty young dandy whose life for five months in the year is given up to galloping across grass country or lounging around stables is decidedly a spendthrift so far as time is concerned.

I wish—if it be not impious so to wish—that every young man could have one glimpse into the future. Supposing some good genius could say, “If you proceed as you are now doing, your position in your fortieth year will be this!” what a horror would strike through many among us, and how desperately each would strive to take advantage of that kindly “If.” But there is no uplifting of the veil; and we must all be guided by the experience



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of the past and not by knowledge of the future. I observe that those who score the greatest number of lost days on the world's calendar always do so under the impression that they are enjoying pleasure. An acute observer whose soul is not vitiated by cynicism may find a kind of melancholy pastime in observing the hopeless attempts of these poor son's to persuade themselves that they are making the best of existence. I would not for worlds seem for a moment to disparage pleasure, because I hold that a human being who lives without joy must either become bad, mad, or wretched. But I speak of those who cheat themselves into thinking that every hour which passes swiftly to eternity is wisely spent. Observe the parties of young men who play at cards even in the railway-train morning after morning and evening after evening. The time of the journey might be spent in useful and happy thought; it is passed in rapid and feverish speculation. There is no question of reviving the brain; it is not recreation that is gained, but distraction, and the brain, instead of being ready to concentrate its power upon work, is enfeebled and rendered vague and flighty. Supposing a youth spends but one hour per day in handling pieces of pasteboard and trying to win his neighbour's money, then in four weeks he has wasted twenty-four hours, and in one year he wastes thirteen days. Is there any gain—mental, muscular, or nervous—from this unhappy pursuit? Not one jot or tittle. Supposing that a weary man of science leaves his laboratory in the evening, and wends his way homeward, the very thought of the game of whist which awaits him is a kind of recuperative agency. Whist is the true recreation of the man of science; and the astronomer or mathematician or biologist goes calmly to rest with his mind at ease after he has enjoyed his rubber. The most industrious of living novelists and the most prolific of all modern writers was asked—so he tells us in his autobiography—“How is it that your thirtieth book is fresher than your first?” He made answer, “I eat very well, keep regular hours, sleep ten hours a day, and never miss my three hours a day at whist.” These men of great brain derive benefit from their harmless contests; the young men in the railway-carriages only waste brain-tissue which they do nothing-to repair. A very beautiful writer who was an extremely lazy man pictures his own lost days as arising before him and saying, “I am thy Self; say, what didst thou to me?” That question may well be asked by all the host of murdered days, but especially may it be asked of those foolish beings who try to gain distinction by recklessly losing money on the Turf or in gambling-saloons. A heart of stone might be moved by seeing the precious time that is hurled to the limbo of lost days in the vulgar pandemonium by the racecourse. A nice lad comes out into the world after attaining his majority, and plunges into that vortex of Hades. Reckon up the good he gets there. Does he gain health?



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Alas, think of the crowd, the rank odours, the straining heart-beats! Does he hear any wisdom? Listen to the hideous badinage, the wild bursts of foul language from the betting-men, the mean, cunning drivel of the gamblers, the shrill laughter of the horsey and unsexed women? Does the youth make friends? Ah, yes! He makes friends who will cheat him at betting, cheat him at horse-dealing, cheat him at gambling when the orgies of the course are over, borrow money as long as he will lend, and throw him over when he has parted with his last penny and his last rag of self-respect. Those who can carry their minds back for twenty years must remember the foolish young nobleman who sold a splendid estate to pay the yelling vulgarians of the betting-ring. They cheered him when he all but beggared himself; they hissed him when he failed once to pay. With lost health, lost patrimony, lost hopes, lost self-respect, he sank amid the rough billows of life's sea, and only one human creature was there to aid him when the great last wave swept over him. Lost days—lost days! Youths who are going to ruin now amid the plaudits of those who live upon them might surely take warning: but they do not, and their bones will soon bleach on the mound whereon those of all other wasters of days have been thrown. When I think of the lost days and the lost lives of which I have cognizance, then it seems as though I were gazing on some vast charnel-house, some ghoul-haunted place of skulls. Memories of those who trifled with life come to me, and their very faces flash past with looks of tragic significance. By their own fault they were ruined; they were shut out of the garden of their gifts; their city of hope was ploughed and salted. The past cannot be retrieved, let canting optimists talk as they choose; what has been has been, and the effects will last and spread until the earth shall pass away. Our acts our angels are, or good or ill; our fatal shadows that walk by us still. The thing done lasts for eternity; the lightest act of man or woman has incalculably vast results. So it is madness to say that the lost days can be retrieved. They cannot! But by timely wisdom we may save the days and make them beneficent and fruitful in the future. Watch those wild lads who are sowing in wine what they reap in headache and degradation. Night after night they laugh with senseless glee, night after night inanities which pass for wit are poured forth; and daily the nerve and strength of each carouser grow weaker. Can you retrieve those nights? Never! But you may take the most shattered of the crew and assure him that all is not irretrievably lost; his weakened nerve may be steadied, his deranged gastric functions may gradually grow more healthy, his distorted views of life may pass away. So far, so good; but never try to persuade any one that the past may be repaired, for that delusion is the very source and spring of the foul stream of lost days. Once impress upon any teachable creature the stern fact that a lost day is lost for ever, once make that belief part of his being, and then he will strive to cheat death. Perhaps it may be thought that I take sombre views of life. No; I see that the world may be made a place of pleasure, but only by learning and obeying the inexorable laws which govern all things, from the fall of a seed of grass to the moving of the miraculous brain of man.



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*April, 1888.*

### *MIDSUMMER DAYS AND MIDSUMMER NIGHTS.*

Soon, with pomp of golden days and silver nights, the dying Summer will wave the world farewell; but the precious time is still with us, and we cherish the glad moments gleefully. When the dawn swirls up in the splendid sky, it is as though one gladsome procession of hours had begun to move. The breeze sighs cool and low, the trees rustle with vast whisperings, and the conquering sun shoots his level volleys from rim to rim of the world. The birds are very, very busy, and they take no thought of the grim time coming, when the iron ground will be swept by chill winds and the sad trees will quiver mournfully in the biting air. A riot of life is in progress, and it seems as if the sense of pure joy banished the very thought of pain and foreboding from all living things. The sleepy afternoons glide away, the sun droops, and the quiet, coloured evening falls solemnly. Then comes the hush of the huge and thoughtful night; the wan stars wash the dust with silver, and the brave day is over. Alas, for those who are pent in populous cities throughout this glorious time! We who are out in the free air may cast a kindly thought on the fate of those to whom "holiday" must be as a word in an unknown tongue. Some of us are happy amid the shade of mighty hills: some of us fare toward the Land of the Midnight Sun, where the golden light steeps all the air by night as well as day; some of us rest beside the sea, where the loud wind, large and free, blows the long surges out in sounding bars and thrills us with fresh fierce pleasure; some of us are able to wander in glowing lanes where the tender roses star the hedges and the murmur of innumerable bees falls softly on the senses. Let us thankfully take the good that is vouchsafed to us, and let those of us who can lend a helping hand do something towards giving the poor and needy a brief taste of the happiness that we freely enjoy.

I do not want to dwell on ugly thoughts; and yet it seems selfish to refrain from speaking of the fate of the poor who are packed in crowded quarters during this bright holiday season. For them the midsummer days and midsummer nights are a term of tribulation. The hot street reeks with pungent odours, the faint airs that wander in the scorching alleys at noonday strike on the fevered face like wafts from some furnace, and the cruel nights are hard to endure save when a cool shower has fallen. If you wander in London byways, you find that the people are fairly driven from their houses after a blistering summer day, and they sit in the streets till early morning. They are not at all depressed; on the contrary, the dark hours are passed in reckless merriment, and I have often known the men to rest quite contentedly on the pavement till the dawn came and the time of departure for labour was near. Even the young children remain out of doors, and their shrill treble mingles with the coarse rattle of noisy choruses. Some



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of those cheery youngsters have an outing in the hopping season, and they come back bronzed and healthy; but most of them have to be satisfied with one day at the most amid the fields and trees. I have spoken of London; but the case of those who dwell in the black manufacturing cities is even worse. What is Oldham like on a blistering midsummer day? What are Hanley and St. Helen's and the lower parts of Manchester like? The air is charged with dust, and the acrid, rasping fumes from the chimneys seem to acquire a malignant power over men and brain. Toil goes steadily on, and the working-folk certainly have the advantage of starting in the bright morning hours, before the air has become befouled; but, as the sun gains strength, and the close air of the unlovely streets is heated, then the torment to be endured is severe. In Oldham and many other Lancashire towns a most admirable custom prevails. Large numbers of people club their money during the year and establish a holiday-fund; they migrate wholesale in the summertime, and have a merry holiday far away from the crush of the pavements and the dreary lines of ugly houses. A wise and beneficent custom is this, and the man who first devised it deserves a monument. I congratulate the troops of toilers who share my own pleasure; but, alas, how many honest folk in those awful Midland places will pant and sweat and suffer amid grime and heat while the glad months are passing! Good men who might be happy even in the free spaces of the Far West, fair women who need only rest and pure air to enable them to bloom in beauty, little children who peak and pine, are all crammed within the odious precincts of the towns which Cobbett hated; and the merry stretches of the sea, the billowy roll of the downs, the peace of soft days, are not for them. Only last year I looked on a stretch of interminable brown sand, hard and smooth and broad, with the ocean perpetually rolling in upon it with slow-measured sweep, with rustle and hiss and foam, and many a thump as of low bass drums. There before me was Whitman's very vision, and in the keen mystic joy of the moment I could not help thinking sadly of one dreadful alley where lately I had been. It seemed so sad that the folk of the alley could not share my pleasure; and the murmur of vain regrets came to the soul even amid the triumphant clamour of the free wind. Poor cramped townfolk, hard is your fate! It is hard; but I can see no good in repining over their fortune if we aid them as far as we can; rather let us speak of the bright time that comes for the toilers who are able to escape from the burning streets.



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The mathematicians and such-like dry personages confine midsummer to one day in June; but we who are untrammelled by science know a great deal better. For us midsummer lasts till August is half over, and we utterly refuse to trouble ourselves about equinoxes and solstices and trivialities of that kind. For us it is midsummer while the sun is warm, while the trees hold their green, while the dancing waves fling their blossoms of foam under the darting rays that dazzle us, while the sacred night is soft and warm and the cool airs are wafted like sounds of blessings spoken in the scented darkness. For us the solstice is abolished, and we sturdily refuse to give up our midsummer till the first gleam of yellow comes on the leaves. We are not all lucky enough to see the leagues upon leagues of overpowering colour as the sun comes up on the Alps; we cannot all rest in the glittering seclusion of Norwegian fiords; but most of us, in our modest way, can enjoy our extravagantly prolonged midsummer beside the shore of our British waters. Spring is the time for hope; our midsummer is the time for ripened joy, for healthful rest; and we are satisfied with the beaches and cliffs that are hallowed by many memories—we are satisfied with simple copses and level fields. They say that spring is the poet's season; but we know better. Spring is all very well for those who have constant leisure; it is good to watch the gradual bursting of early buds; it is good to hear the thrush chant his even-song of love; it is good to rest the eye on the glorious clouds of bloom that seem to float in the orchards. But the midsummer, the gallant midsummer, pranked in manifold splendours, is the true season of poetry for the toilers. The birds of passage who are now crowding out of the towns have had little pleasure in the spring, and their blissful days are only now beginning. What is it to them that the seaside landlady crouches awaiting her prey? What is it to them that 'Arry is preparing to make night hideous? They are bound for their rest, and the surcease of toil is the only thing that suggests poetry to them. Spring the season for poets! We wipe away that treasonable suggestion just as we have wiped out the solstice. We holiday makers are not going to be tyrannized over by literary and scientific persons, and we insist on taking our own way. Our blood beats fully only at this season, and not even the extortioners' bills can daunt us. Let us break into poetry and flout the maudlin enthusiasts who prate of spring.

With a ripple of leaves and a twinkle of streams  
The full world rolls in a rhythm of praise,  
And the winds are one with the clouds and beams—  
Midsummer days! Midsummer days!  
The dusks grow vast in a purple haze,  
While the West from a rapture of sunset rights,  
Faint stars their exquisite lamps upraise—  
Midsummer nights! O Midsummer nights!

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The wood's green heart is a nest of dreams,  
The lush grass thickens and springs and sways,



The rathe wheat rustles, the landscape gleams—  
Midsummer days! Midsummer days!  
In the stilly fields, in the stilly way,  
All secret shadows and mystic lights,  
Late lovers, murmurous, linger and gaze—  
Midsummer nights! O Midsummer nights!



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There's a swagger of bells from the trampling teams,  
Wild skylarks hover, the gorses blaze,  
The rich ripe rose as with incense steams—  
Midsummer days! Midsummer days!  
A soul from the honeysuckle strays,  
And the nightingale, as from prophet heights,  
Speaks to the Earth of her million Mays—  
Midsummer nights! O Midsummer nights!

And it's oh for my Dear and the charm that stays—  
Midsummer days! Midsummer days!  
And it's oh for my Love and the dark that plights—  
Midsummer nights! O Midsummer nights!

There is a burst for you! And we will let the poets of spring, with their lambkins and their catkins and the rest, match this poem of William Henley's if they can. The royal months are ours, and we love the reign of the rose.

When the burnished tints of bronze shine on the brackens, and the night-wind blows with a chilly moan from the fields of darkness, we shall have precious days to remember, and, ah, when the nights are long, and the churlish Winter lays his fell finger on stream and grass and tree, we shall be haunted by jolly memories! Will the memories be wholly pleasant? Perchance, when the curtains are drawn and the lamp burns softly, we may read of bright and beautiful things. Out of doors the war of the winter fills the roaring darkness. It may be that

Hoarsely across the iron ground  
The icy wind goes roaring past,  
The powdery wreaths go whirling round  
Dancing a measure to the blast.

The hideous sky droops darkly down  
In brooding swathes of misty gloom,  
And seems to wrap the fated town  
In shadows of remorseless doom.

Then some of us may find a magic phrase of Keats's, or Thomas Hardy's, or Black's, or Dickens's, that recalls the lovely past from the dead. Many times I have had that experience. Once, after spending the long and glorious summer amid the weird subdued beauty of a wide heath, I returned to the great city. It had been a pleasant sojourn, though I had had no company save a collie and one or two terriers. At evening the dogs liked their ramble, and we all loved to stay out until the pouring light of the



moon shone on billowy mists and heath-clad knolls. The faint rustling of the heath grew to a wide murmur, the little bells seemed to chime with notes heard only by the innermost spirit, and the gliding dogs were like strange creatures from some shadowy underworld. At times a pheasant would rise and whirl like a rocket from hillock to hollow, and about midnight a rapturous concert began. On one line of trees a colony of nightingales had established themselves near the heart of the waste. First came the low inquiry from the leader; then two or three low twittering answers; then the one long note that lays hold of the nerves and makes the whole being quiver; and then—ah,



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the passion, the pain, the unutterable delight of the heavenly jargoning when the whole of the little choir begin their magnificent rivalry! The thought of death is gone, the wild and poignant issues of life are softened, and the pulses beat thickly amid the blinding sweetness of the music. He who has not heard the nightingale has not lived. Far off the sea called low through the mist, and the long path of the moon ran toward the bright horizon; the ships stole in shadow and shine over the glossy ripples, and swung away to north and south till they faded in wreaths of delicate darkness. Dominating the whole scene of beauty, there was the vast and subtle mystery of the heath that awed the soul even when the rapture was at its keenest. Time passed away, and on one savage night I read Thomas Hardy's unparalleled description of the majestic waste in "The Return of the Native." That superb piece of English is above praise—indeed praise, as applied to it, is half an impertinence; it is great as Shakespeare, great almost as Nature—one of the finest poems in our language. As I read with awe the quiet inevitable sentences, the vision of my own heath rose, and the memory filled me with a sudden joy.

I know that the hour of darkness ever dogs our delight, and the shadow of approaching darkness and toil might affront me even now, if I were ungrateful; but I live for the present only. Let grave persons talk about the grand achievements and discoveries that have made this age or that age illustrious; I hold that holidays are the noblest invention of the human mind, and, if any philosopher wants to argue the matter, I flee from his presence, and luxuriate on the yellow sands or amid the keen kisses of the salty waves. I own that Newton's discoveries were meritorious, and I willingly applaud Mr. George Stephenson, through whose ingenuity we are now whisked to our places of rest with the swiftness of an eagle's flight. Nevertheless I contend that holidays are the crowning device of modern thought, and I hold that no thesis can be so easily proven as mine. How did our grandfathers take holiday? Alas, the luxury was reserved for the great lords who scoured over the Continent, and for the pursy cits who crawled down to Brighthelmstone! The ordinary Londoner was obliged to endure agonies on board a stuffy Margate hoy, while the people in Northern towns never thought of taking a holiday at all. The marvellous cures wrought by Doctor Ozone were not then known, and the science of holiday-making was in its infancy. The wisdom of our ancestors was decidedly at fault in this matter, and the gout and dyspepsia from which they suffered served them right. Read volumes of old memoirs, and you will find that our forefathers, who are supposed to have been so merry and healthy, suffered from all the ills which grumblers ascribe to struggling civilization. They did not know how to extract pleasure from their midsummer days and midsummer nights; we do, and we are all the better for the grand modern discovery.



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Seriously, it is a good thing that we have learned the value of leisure, and, for my own part, I regard the rushing yearly exodus from London, Liverpool, Birmingham, with serene satisfaction. It is a pity that so many English folk persist in leaving their own most lovely land when our scenery and climate are at their best. In too many cases they wear themselves with miserable and harassing journeys when they might be placidly rejoicing in the sweet midsummer days at home. Snarling aesthetes may say what they choose, but England is not half explored yet, and anybody who takes the trouble may find out languorous nooks where life seems always dreamy, and where the tired nerves and brain are unhurt by a single disturbing influence. There are tiny villages dotted here and there on the coast where the flaunting tourist never intrudes, and where the British cad cares not to show his unlovable face. Still, if people like the stuffy Continental hotel and the unspeakable devices of the wily Swiss, they must take their choice. I prefer beloved England; but I wish all joy to those who go far afield.

*June, 1886.*

*DANDIES.*

Perhaps there is no individual of all our race who is quite insensible to the pleasures of what children call "dressing-up." Even the cynic, the man who defiantly wears old and queer clothes, is merely suffering from a perversion of that animal instinct which causes the peacock to swagger in the sun and flaunt the splendour of his train, the instinct that makes the tiger-moth show the magnificence of his damask wing, and also makes the lion erect the horrors of his cloudy mane and paw proudly before his tawny mate. We are all alike in essentials, and Diogenes with his dirty clouts was only a perverted brother of Prince Florizel with his peach-coloured coat and snowy ruffles. I intend to handle the subject of dandies and their nature from a deeply philosophic starting-point, for, like Carlyle, I recognize the vast significance of the questions involved in the philosophy of clothes. Let no flippant individual venture on a jeer, for I am in dead earnest. A mocking critic may point to the Bond Street lounge and ask, "What are the net use and purport of that being's existence? Look at his suffering frame! His linen stock almost decapitates him, his boots appear to hail from the chambers of the Inquisition, every garment tends to confine his muscles and dwarf his bodily powers; yet he chooses to smile in his torments and pretends to luxuriate in life. Again, what are the net use and purport of his existence?" I can only deprecate our critic's wrath by going gravely to first principles. O savage and critical one, that suffering youth of Bond Street is but exhibiting in flaunting action a law that has influenced the breed of men since our forefathers dwelt in caves or trees! Observe the conduct of the innocent and primitive beings who dwell in sunny archipelagos far away to the South; they suffer in the cause of



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fashion as the youth of the city promenade suffers. The chief longing of the judicious savage is to shave, but the paucity of metals and sharp instruments prevents him from indulging his longing very frequently. When the joyous chance does come, the son of the forest promptly rises to the occasion. No elderly gentleman whose feet are studded with corns could bear the agony of patent leather boots in a heated ballroom with grander stoicism than that exhibited by our savage when he compasses the means of indulging in a thorough uncompromising shave. The elderly man of the ballroom sees the rosy-fingered dawn touching the sky into golden fretwork; he thinks of his cool white bed, and then, by contrast, he thinks of his hot throbbing feet. Shooting fires dart through his unhappy extremities, yet he smiles on and bears his pain for his daughters' sake. But the elderly hero cannot be compared with the ambitious exquisite of the Southern Seas, and we shall prove this hypothesis. The careless voyager throws a beer-bottle overboard, and that bottle drifts to the glad shore of a glittering isle; the overjoyed savage bounds on the prize, and proceeds to announce his good fortune to his bosom friend. Then the pleased cronies decide that they will have a good, wholesome, thorough shave, and they will turn all rivals green with unavailing envy. Solemnly those children of nature go to a quiet place, and savage number one lies down while his friend sits on his head; then with a shred of the broken bottle the operator proceeds to rasp away. It is a great and grave function, and no savage worthy the name of warrior would fulfil it in a slovenly way. When the last scrape is given, and the stubbly irregular crop of bristles stands up from a field of gore, then the operating brave lies down, and his scarified friend sits on *his* head. These sweet and satisfying idyllic scenes are enacted whenever a bottle comes ashore, and the broken pieces of the receptacles that lately held foaming Bass or glistening Hochheimer are used until their edge gives way, to the great contentment of true untutored dandies. The Bond Street man is at one end of the scale, the uncompromising heathen barber at the other; but the same principles actuate both.

The Maori is even more courageous in his attempts to secure a true decorative exterior, for he carves the surface of his manly frame into deep meandering channels until he resembles a walking advertisement of crochet-patterns for ladies. Dire is his suffering, long is the time of healing; but, when he can appear among his friends with a staring blue serpent coiled round his body from the neck to the ankle, when the rude figure of the bounding wallaby ornaments his noble chest, he feels that all his pain was worth enduring and that life is indeed worth living. The primitive dandy of Central Africa submits himself to the magician of the tribe, and has his front teeth knocked out with joy; the Ashantee or the Masai has



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his teeth filed to sharp points—and each painful process enables the victim to pose as a leader of fashion in the tribe. As the race rises higher, the refinements of dandyism become more and more complex, but the ruling motive remains the same, and the Macaroni, the Corinthian, the Incroyable, the swell, the dude—nay, even the common toff—are all mysteriously stirred by the same instinct which prompts the festive Papuan to bore holes in his innocent nose. Who then shall sneer at the dandy? Does he not fulfil a law of our nature? Let us rather regard him with toleration, or even with some slight modicum of reverence. Solemn historians affect to smile at the gaudy knights of the second Richard's Court, who wore the points of their shoes tied round their waists; they even ridicule the tight, choking, padded coats worn by George IV., that pattern father of his people; but I see in the stumbling courtier and the half-asphyxiated wearer of the padded Petersham coat two beings who act under the demands of inexorable law.

Our great modern sage brooded in loneliness for some six years over the moving problem of dandyism, and we have the results of his meditations in "Sartor Resartus." We have an uneasy sense that he may be making fun of us—in fact, we are almost sure that he is; for, if you look at his summary of the doctrines put forth in "Pelham," you can hardly fail to detect a kind of sub-acid sneer. Instead of being impressed by the dainty musings of the learned Bulwer, that grim vulturine sage chose to curl his fierce lips and turn the whole thing to a laughing-stock. We must at once get to that summary of what the great Thomas calls "Dandiacal doctrine," and then just thinkers may draw their own conclusions.

Articles of Faith.—1. Coats should have nothing of the triangle about them; at the same time wrinkles behind should be carefully avoided. 2. The collar is a very important point; it should be low behind, and slightly rolled. 3. No license of fashion can allow a man of delicate taste to adopt the posterial luxuriance of a Hottentot. 4. There is safety in a swallowtail. 5. The good sense of a gentleman is nowhere more finely developed than in his rings. 6. It is permitted to mankind, under certain restrictions, to wear white waistcoats. 7. The trousers must be exceedingly tight across the hips.

Then the sage observes, "All which propositions I for the present content myself with modestly, but peremptorily and irrevocably, denying." Wicked Scotchman, rugged chip of the Hartz rock, your seven articles of the Whole Duty of the Dandy are evidently solemn fooling! You despised Lytton in your heart, and you thought that because you wore a ragged duffel coat in gay Hyde Park you had a right to despise the human ephemera who appeared in inspiring splendour. I have often laughed at your solemn enumeration of childish maxims, but I am not quite sure that you were altogether right in sneering.



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So far for the heroic vein. The Clothes Philosopher whose huge burst of literary horse-laughter was levelled at the dandy does not always confine himself to indirect scoffing; here is a plain statement—"First, touching dandies, let us consider with some scientific strictness what a dandy specially is. A dandy is a clothes-wearing man, a man whose trade office, and existence consist in the wearing of clothes. Every faculty of his soul, spirit, purse, and person is heroically consecrated to this one object—the wearing of clothes wisely and well; so that, as others dress to live, he lives to dress. The all-importance of clothes has sprung upon the intellect of the dandy without effort, like an instinct of genius; he is inspired with cloth—a poet of cloth. Like a generous creative enthusiast, he fearlessly makes his idea an action—shows himself in peculiar guise to mankind, walks forth a witness and living martyr to the eternal worth of clothes. We called him a poet; is not his body the (stuffed) parchment-skin whereon he writes, with cunning Huddersfield dyes, a sonnet to his mistress's eyebrow?"

This is very witty and very trenchant in allusion, but I am obliged to say seriously that Carlyle by no means reached the root of the matter. The mere tailor's dummy is deplorable, despicable, detestable, but a real man is none the worse if he gives way to the imperious human desire for adornment, and some of the men who have made permanent marks on the world's face have been of the tribe whom our Scotchman satirised. I have known sensible young men turned into perfectly objectionable slovens by reading Carlyle; they thought they rendered a tribute to their master's genius by making themselves look disreputable, and they found allies to applaud them. One youth of a poetic turn saw that the sage let his hair fall over his forehead in a tangled mass. Now this young man had very nice wavy hair, which naturally fell back in a sweep, but he devoted himself with an industry worthy of a much better cause to the task of making his hair fall in unkempt style over his brow. When he succeeded, he looked partly like a Shetland pony, partly like a street-arab; but his own impression was that his wild and ferocious appearance acted as a living rebuke to young men of weaker natures. If I had to express a blunt opinion, I should say he was a dreadful simpleton. Every man likes to be attractive in some way in the springtime and hey-day of life; when the blood flushes the veins gaily and the brain is sensitive to joy, then a man glories in looking well. Why blame him? The young officer likes to show himself with his troop in gay trappings; the athlete likes to wear garments that set off his frame to advantage; and it is good that this desire for distinction exists, else we should have but a grey and sorry world to live in. When the pulses beat quietly and life moves on the downward slope, a man relies on more sober attractions, and he ceases to care for that physical adornment which



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every young and healthy living creature on earth appreciates. So long as our young men are genuinely manly, good, strong, and courageous, I am not inclined to find fault with them, even if they happen to trip and fall into slight extravagances in the matter of costume. The creature who lives to dress I abhor, the sane and sound man who fulfils his life-duties gallantly and who is not above pleasing himself and others by means of reasonable adornments I like and even respect warmly. The philosophers may growl as they chose, but I contend that the sight of a superb young Englishman with his clean clear face, his springy limbs, his faultless habiliments is about as pleasant as anything can be to a discerning man. Moreover, it is by no means true that the dandy is necessarily incompetent when he comes to engage in the severe work of life. Our hero, our Nelson, kept his nautical dandyism until he was middle-aged. Who ever accused him of incompetence? Think of his going at Trafalgar into that pouring Inferno of lead and iron with all his decorations blazing on him! "In honour I won them and in honour I will wear them," said this unconscionable dandy; and he did wear them until he had broken our terrible enemy's power, saved London from sack, and worse, and yielded up his gallant soul to his Maker. Rather an impressive kind of dandy was that wizened little animal. "There'll be wigs on the green, boys—the dandies are coming!" So Marlborough's soldiers used to cry when the regiment of exquisites charged. At home the fierce Englishmen strutted around in their merry haunts and showed off their brave finery as though their one task in life were to wear gaudy garments gracefully; but, when the trumpet rang for the charge, the silken dandies showed that they had the stuff of men in them. The philosopher is a trifle too apt to say, "Anybody who does not choose to do as I like is, on the face of it, an inferior member of the human race." I utterly refuse to have any such doctrine thrust down my throat. No sage would venture to declare that the handsome, gorgeous John Churchill was a fool or a failure. He beat England's enemies, he made no blunder in his life, and he survived the most vile calumnies that ever assailed a struggling man; yet, if he was not a dandy, then I never saw or heard of one. All our fine fellows who stray with the British flag over the whole earth belong more or less distinctly to the dandy division. The velvet glove conceals the iron hand; the pleasing modulated voice can rise at short notice to tones of command; the apparent languor will on occasion start with electric suddenness into martial vigour. The lounging dandies who were in India when the red storm of the Mutiny burst from a clear sky suddenly became heroes who toiled, fought, lavished their strength and their blood, performed glorious prodigies of unselfish action, and snatched an empire from the fires of ruin.



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Even if a young fellow cannot afford fine clothes, he can be neat, and I always welcome the slightest sign of fastidiousness, because it indicates self-respect. The awful beings who wear felt hats swung on one side, glaring ties, obtrusive checks, and carry vulgar little sticks, are so abhorrent that I should journey a dozen miles to escape meeting one of them. The cheap, nasty, gaudy garments are an index to a vast vulgarity of mind and soul; the cheap “swell” is a sham, and, as a sham, he is immoral and repulsive. But the modest youth need not copy the wild unrestraint of the gentleman known as “Arry”; he can contrive to make himself attractive without sullyng his appearance by a trace of cheap and nasty adornment, and every attempt which he makes to look seemly and pleasing tends subtly to raise his own character. Once or twice I have said that you cannot really love any one wholly unless you can sometimes laugh at him. Now I cannot laugh at the invertebrate haunter of flashy bars and theatre-stalls, because he has not the lovable element in him which invites kindly laughter; but I do smile—not unadmiringly—at our dandy, and forgive him his little eccentricities because I know that what the Americans term the “hard pan” of his nature is sound. It is all very well for unhandsome philosophers in duffel to snarl at our butterfly youth. The dry dull person who devours blue-books and figures may mock at their fribbles; but persons who are tolerant take large and gentle views, and they indulge the dandy, and let him strut for his day unmolested, until the pressing hints given by the years cause him to modify his splendours and sink into unassuming sobriety of demeanour and raiment.

*June, 1888.*

### *GENIUS AND RESPECTABILITY.*

A very lengthy biography of Percy Bysshe Shelley appeared recently, and the biographer thought it his duty to give the most minute and peculiar details concerning the poet's private life. In consequence, the book is a deplorable one in many respects, and no plain-minded person can read it without feeling sorry that our sweet singer should be presented to us in the guise of a weak-minded hypocrite. One critic wrote a great many pages in which he bemoans the dreary and sordid family-life of the man who wrote the “Ode to the West Wind.” I can hardly help sympathizing with the critic, for indeed Shelley's proceedings rather test the patience of ordinary mortals, who do not think that poetic—or rather artistic—ability licenses its possessor to behave like a scoundrel. Shelley wrote the most lovely verse in praise of purity; but he tempted a poor child to marry him, deserted her, insulted her, and finally left her to drown herself when brutal neglect and injury had driven her crazy. Poor Harriet Westbrook! She did not behave very discreetly after her precious husband left her; but she was young, and thrown on a hard world without any strength but her own to protect her. While she was drifting



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into misery the airy poet was talking sentiment and ventilating his theories of the universe to Mary Godwin. Harriet was too “shallow” for the rhymester, and the penalty she paid for her shallowness was to be deceived, enticed into a rash marriage, brutally insulted, and left to fare as well as she might in a world that is bitterly cruel to helpless girls. The maker of rhymes goes off gaily to the Continent to enjoy himself heartily and write bewitching poems; Harriet stays at home and lives as best she can on her pittance until the time comes for her despairing plunge into the Serpentine. It is true that the poet invited the poor creature to come and stay with him; but what a piece of unparalleled insolence toward a wronged lady! The admirers of the rhymer say, “Ah, but Harriet’s society was not congenial to the poet.” Congenial! How many brave men make their bargain in youth and stand to it gallantly unto the end? A simple soul of this sort thinks to himself, “Well, I find that my wife and I are not in sympathy; but perhaps I may be in fault. At any rate, she has trusted her life to me, and I must try to make her days as happy as possible.” It seems that supreme poets are to be exempt from all laws of manliness and honour, and a simple woman who cannot babble to them about their ideals and so forth is to be pitched aside like a soiled glove! Honest men who cannot jingle words are content with faith and honour and rectitude, but the poet is to be applauded if he behaves like a base fellow on finding that some unhappy loving creature cannot talk in his particular fashion. We may all be very low Philistines if we are not prepared to accept rhymers for chartered villains; but some of us still have a glimmering of belief in the old standards of nobility and constancy. Can any one fancy Walter Scott cheating a miserable little girl of sixteen into marriage, and then leaving her, only to marry a female philosopher? How that noble soul would have spurned the maundering sentimentalist who talked of truth and beauty, and music and moonlight and feeling, and behaved as a mean and bad man! Scott is more to my fancy than is Shelley.

Again, this poet, this exquisite weaver of verbal harmonies, is represented to us by his worshippers as having a passion for truth; whereas it happens that he was one of the most remarkable fibbers that ever lived. He would come home with amazing tales about assassins who had waylaid him, and try to give himself importance by such blustering inventions. “Imagination!” says the enthusiast; but among commonplace persons another word is used. “Your lordship knows what kleptomania is?” said a counsel who was defending a thief. Justice Byles replied, “Oh, yes! I come here to cure it.” Some critical justice might say the same of Shelley’s imagination. We are also told that Shelley’s excessive nobility of nature prevented him from agreeing with his commonplace father; and truly the poet was a bad and an ungrateful



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son. But, if a pretty verse-maker is privileged to be an undutiful son, what becomes of all our old notions? I think once more of the great Sir Walter, and I remember his unquestioning obedience to his parents. Then we may also remember Gibbon, who was quite as able and useful a man as Shelley. The historian loved a young French lady, but his father refused consent to their marriage, and Gibbon quietly obeyed and accepted his hard fate. The passion sanctified his whole life, and, as he says, made him more dear to himself; he settled his colossal work, and remained unmarried for life. He may have been foolish: but I prefer his behaviour to that of a man who treats his father with contumely and ingratitude even while he is living upon him. We hear much of Shelley's unselfishness, but it does not appear that he ever denied himself the indulgence of a whim. The "Ode to the West Wind," the "Ode Written in Dejection near Naples," and "The Skylark" are unsurpassed and unsurpassable; but I can hardly pardon a man for cruelty and turpitude merely because he produces a few masterpieces of art.

A confident and serene critic attacks Mr. Arnold very severely because the latter writer thinks that poets should be amenable to fair and honest social laws. If I understand the critic aright, we must all be so thankful for beautiful literary works that we must be ready to let the producers of such works play any pranks they please under high heaven. They are the children of genius, and we are to spoil them; "Childe Harold" and "Manfred" are such wondrous productions that we need never think of the author's orgies at Venice and the Abbey; "Epipsychidion" is lovely, so we should not think of poor Harriet Westbrook casting herself into the Serpentine. This is marvellous doctrine, and one hardly knows whither it might lead us if we carried it into thorough practice. Suppose that, in addition to indulging the spoiled children of genius, we were to approve all the proceedings of the clever children in any household. I fancy that the dwellers therein would have an unpleasant time. Noble charity towards human weakness is one thing; but blind adulation of clever and immoral men is another. We have great need to pity the poor souls who are the prey of their passions, but we need not worship them. A large and lofty charity will forgive the shortcomings of Robert Burns; we may even love that wild and misguided but essentially noble man. That is well; yet we must not put Burns forward and offer our adulation in such a way as to set him up for a model to young men. A man may read—

The pale moon is setting beyond the white wave,  
And Time is setting with me, oh!

The pathos will wring his heart; but he should not ask any youth to imitate the conduct of the great poet. Carlyle said very profoundly that new morality must be made before we can judge Mirabeau; but Carlyle never put his hero's excesses in the foreground of his history, nor did he try to apologize for them; he only said, "Here is a man whose stormy passions overcame him and drove him down the steep to ruin! Think of him at

his best, pardon him, and imitate, in your weak human fashion, the infinite Divine Mercy.” That is good; and it is certainly very different from the behaviour of writers who ask us to regard their heroes’ evil-doing as not only pardonable, but as being almost admirable.



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This Shelley controversy raises several weighty issues. We forgive Burns because he again and again offers us examples of splendid self-sacrifice in the course of his broken life, and we are able to do so because the balance is greatly on the good side; but we do not refrain from saying, "In some respects Burns was a scamp." The fact is that the claims of weak-headed adorers who worship men of genius would lead to endless mischief if they were allowed. Men who were skilled in poetry and music and art have often behaved like scoundrels; but their scoundrelism should be reprobated, and not excused. And my reason for this contention is very simple—once allow that a man of genius may override all salutary conventions, and the same conventions will be overridden by vain and foolish mediocrities. Take, for example, the conventions which guide us in the matter of dress. Most people grant that in many respects our modern dress is ugly in shape, ugly in material, and calculated to promote ill-health. The hard hat which makes the brow ache must affect the wearer's health, and therefore, when we see the greatest living poet going about in a comfortable soft felt, we call him a sensible man. Carlyle used to hobble about with soft shoes and soft slouch-hat, and he was right. But it is possible to be as comfortable as Lord Tennyson or Carlyle without flying very outrageously in the face of modern conventions; and many everyday folk contrive to keep their bodies at ease without trying any fool's device. Charles Kingsley used to roam about in his guernsey—most comfortable of all dresses—when he was in the country; but when he visited the town he managed to dress easily and elegantly in the style of an average gentleman.

But some foolish creatures say in their hearts, "Men of genius wear strange clothing—Tennyson wears a vast Inverness cape, Carlyle wore a duffel jacket, Bismarck wears a flat white cap, Mortimer Collins wore a big Panama; artists in general like velvet and neckties of various gaudy hues. Let us adopt something startling in the way of costume, and we may be taken for men of genius." Thus it happened that very lately London was invested by a set of simpletons of small ability in art and letters; they let their hair grow down their backs; they drove about in the guise of Venetian senators of the fifteenth century; they appeared in slashed doublets and slouched hats; and one of them astonished the public—and the cabmen—by marching down a fashionable thoroughfare on a broiling day with a fur ulster on his back and a huge flower in his hand. Observe my point—these social nuisances obtained for themselves a certain contemptible notoriety by caricaturing the ways of able men. I can forgive young Disraeli's gaudy waistcoats and pink-lined coats, but I have no patience with his silly imitators. This is why I object to the praise which is bestowed on men of genius for qualities which do not deserve praise. The reckless literary admirer of Shelley or Byron goes into ecstasies and cries, "Perish the slave who would think of these great men's vices!"—whereupon raw and conceited youngsters say, "Vice and eccentricity are signs of genius. We will be vicious and eccentric;" and then they go and convert themselves into public nuisances.

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That vice and folly are not always associated with genius scarcely needs demonstrating. I allow that many great men have been sensual fools, but we can by no means allow that folly and sensuality are inseparable from greatness. My point is to prove that littleness must be conquered before a man can be great or good. Macaulay lived a life of perfect and exemplary purity; he was good in all the relations of life; those nearest to him loved him most dearly, and his days were passed in thinking of the happiness of others. Perhaps he was vain—certainly he had something to be vain of—but, though he had such masterful talent, he never thought himself licensed, and he wore the white flower of a blameless life until his happy spirit passed easily away. Wordsworth was a poet who will be placed on a level with Byron when an estimate of our century's great men comes to be made. But Wordsworth lived his sweet and pious life without in any way offending against the moral law. We must have done with all talk about the privileges of irregular genius; a clever man must be made to see that, while he may be as independent as he likes, he cannot be left free to offend either the sense or the sensibility of his neighbours. The genius must learn to conduct himself in accordance with rational and seemly custom, or he must be brought to his senses. When a great man's ways are merely innocently different from those of ordinary people, by all means let him alone. For instance, Leonardo da Vinci used often to buy caged wild-birds from their captors and let them go free. What a lovely and lovable action! He hurt no one; he restored the joy of life to innocent creatures, and no one could find fault with his sweet fancy. In the same way, when Samuel Johnson chose to stalk ponderously along the streets, stepping on the edges of the paving-stones, or even when he happened to roar a little loudly in conversation, who could censure him seriously? His heart was as a little child's: his deeds were saintly; and we perhaps love him all the more for his droll little ways. But, when Shelley outrages decency and the healthy sense of manliness by his peculiar escapades, it is not easy to pardon him; the image of that drowned child rises before us, and we are apt to forget the pretty verses. Calm folk remember that many peculiarly wicked and selfish gentry have been able to make nice rhymes and paint charming pictures. The old poet Francois Villon, who has made men weep and sympathize for so many years, was a burglar, a murderer, and something baser, if possible, than either murderer or burglar. A more despicable being probably never existed; and yet he warbles with angelic sweetness, and his piercing sadness thrills us after the lapse of four centuries. Young men of unrestrained appetites and negative morality are often able to talk most charmingly, but the meanest and most unworthy persons whom I have met have been the wild and lofty-minded poets who perpetually express



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contempt of Philistines and cast the shaft of their scorn at what they call "dross." So far as money goes, I fancy that the oratorical, and grandiose poet is often the most greedy of individuals; and, when, in his infinite conceit, he sets himself up above common decency and morality, I find it difficult to confine myself to moderate language. A man of genius may very well be chaste, modest, unselfish, and retiring. Byron was at his worst when he was producing the works which made him immortal; I prefer to think of him as he was when he cast his baser self away, and nobly took up the cause of Greece. When once his matchless common sense asserted itself, and he ceased to contemplate his own woes and his own wrongs, he became a far greater man than he had ever been before. I should be delighted to know that the cant about the lowering restrictions imposed by stupidity on genius had been silenced for ever. A man of transcendent ability must never forget that he is a member of a community, and that he has no more right wantonly to offend the feelings or prejudices of that community than he has to go about buffeting individual members with a club. As soon as he offends the common feelings of his fellows he must take the consequences; and hard-headed persons should turn a deaf ear when any eloquent and sentimental person chooses to whine about his hero's wrongs.

*March, 1888.*

### SLANG.

Has any one ever yet considered the spiritual significance of slang? The dictionaries inform us that "slang is a conversational irregularity of a more or less vulgar type;" but that is not all. The prim definition refers merely to words, but I am rather more interested in considering the mental attitude which is indicated by the distortion and loose employment of words, and by the fresh coinages which seem to spring up every hour. I know of no age or nation that has been without its slang, and the study is amongst the most curious that a scholar can take up; but our own age, after all, must be reckoned as the palmy time of slang, for we have gone beyond mere words, and our vulgarizations of language are significant of degradation of soul. The Romans of the decadence had a hideous cant language which fairly matched the grossness of the people, and the Gauls, with their descendants, fairly matched the old conquerors. The frightful old Paris of Francois Villon, with all its bleak show of famine and death, had its constant changes of slang. "*Tousjours vieil synges est desplaisant,*" says the burglar-poet, and he means that the old buffoon is tiresome; the young man with the newest phases of city slang at his tongue's end is most acceptable in merry company. Very few people can read Villon's longer poems at all, for they are almost entirely written in cant language, and the glossary must be in constant requisition. The rascal is a really great writer in his abominable way, but his dialect was that of the lowest resorts,

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and he lets us see that the copious *argot* which now puzzles the stranger by its kaleidoscopic changes was just as vivid and changeable in the miserable days of the eleventh Louis. In the Paris of our day the slang varies from hour to hour; every one seems able to follow it, and no one knows who invents the constant new changes. The slang of the boarding-house in Balzac's "Pere Goriot" is quite different from that of the novels done by the Goncourt brothers; and, though I have not yet mustered courage to finish one of M. Zola's outrages, I can see that the vulgarisms which he has learned are not at all like any that have been used in bygone days. The corruption of Paris seems to breed verbal distortions rather freely, and the ordinary babble of the city workman is as hard to any Englishman as are the colloquialisms of Burns to the average Cockney.

In England our slang has undergone one transformation after another ever since the time of Chaucer. Shakespeare certainly gives us plenty; then we have the slang of the Great War, and then the unutterable horrors of the Restoration—even the highly proper Mr. Joseph Addison does not disdain to talk of an "old put," and his wags are given to "smoking" strangers. The eighteenth century—the century of the gallows—gave us a whole crop of queer terms which were first used in thieves' cellars, and gradually filtered from the racecourse and the cockpit till they took their place in the vulgar tongue. The sweet idyll of "Life in London" is a perfect garden of slang; Tom the Corinthian and Bob Logic lard their phrases with the idiom of the prize-ring, and the author obligingly italicises the knowing words so that one has no chance of missing them. But nowadays we have passed beyond all that, and every social clique, every school of art and literature, every trade—nay, almost every religion—has its peculiar slang; and the results as regards morals, manners, and even conduct in general are too remarkable to be passed over by any one who desires to understand the complex society of our era. The mere patter of thieves or racing-men—the terms are nearly synonymous—counts for nothing. Those who know the byways of life know that there are two kinds of dark language used by our nomad classes and by our human predatory animals. A London thief can talk a dialect which no outsider can possibly understand; for, by common agreement, arbitrary names are applied to every object which the robbers at any time handle, and to every sort of underhand business which they transact. But this gibberish is not exactly an outcome of any moral obliquity; it is employed as a means of securing safety. The gipsy cant is the remnant of a pure and ancient language; we all occasionally use terms taken from this remarkable tongue, and, when we speak of a "cad," or "making a mull," or "bosh," or "shindy," or "cadger" or "bamboozling," or "mug," or "duffer," or "tool," or "queer," or "maunder," or "loafer," or "bung," we are using pure gipsy. No distinct mental process, no process of corruption, is made manifest by the use of these terms; we simply have picked them up unconsciously, and we continue to utter them in the course of familiar conversation.



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I am concerned with a degradation of language which is of an importance far beyond the trifling corruption caused by the introduction of terms from the gipsy's caravan, the betting ring, or the thieves' kitchen; one cannot help being made angry and sad by observing a tendency to belittle all things that are great, to mock all earnestness, to vulgarize all beauty. There is not a quarter where the subtle taint has not crept in, and under its malign influence poetry has all but expired, good conversation has utterly ceased to exist, art is no longer serious, and the intercourse of men is not straightforward. The Englishman will always be emotional in spite of the rigid reserve which he imposes upon himself; he is an enthusiast, and he does truly love earnestness, veracity, and healthy vigour. Take him away from a corrupt and petty society and give him free scope, and he at once lets fall the film of shams from off him like a cast garment, and comes out as a reality. Shut the same Englishman up in an artificial, frivolous, unreal society, and he at once becomes afraid of himself; he fears to exhibit enthusiasm about anything, and he hides his genuine nature behind a cloud of slang. He belittles everything he touches, he is afraid to utter a word from his inner heart, and his talk becomes a mere dropping shower of verbal counters which ring hollow. The superlative degree is abhorrent to him unless he can misuse it for comic purposes; and, like the ridiculous dummy lord in "Nicholas Nickleby," he is quite capable of calling Shakespeare a "very clayver man." I have heard of the attitude taken by two flowers of our society in presence of Joachim. Think of it! The unmatched violinist had achieved one of those triumphs which seem to permeate the innermost being of a worthy listener; the soul is entranced, and the magician takes us into a fair world where there is nothing but loveliness and exalted feeling. "Vewy good fellow, that fiddle fellow," observed the British aristocrat. "Ya-as," answered his faithful friend. Let any man who is given to speaking words with a view of presenting the truth begin to speak in our faint, super-refined, orthodox society; he will be looked at as if he were some queer object brought from a museum of curiosities and pulled out for exhibition. The shallowest and most impudent being that ever talked fooleries will assume superior airs and treat the man of intellect as an amusing but inferior creature. More than that—earnestness and reality are classed together under the head of "bad form," the vital word grates on the emasculate brain of the society man, and he compensates himself for his inward consciousness of inferiority by assuming easy airs of insolence. A very brilliant man was once talking in a company which included several of the superfine division; he was witty, vivid, genial, full of knowledge and tact; but he had one dreadful habit—he always said what he thought. The brilliant man left the company, and one sham-languid



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person said to a sham-aristocratic person, "Who is that?" "Ah, he's a species of over-educated savage!" Now the gentleman who propounded this pleasant piece of criticism was, according to trustworthy history, the meanest, most useless, and most despicable man of his set; yet he could venture to assume haughty airs towards a man whose shoes he was not fit to black, and he could assume those airs on the strength of his slangy impassivity—his "good form." When we remember that this same fictitious indifference characterized the typical *grand seigneur* of old France, and when we also remember that indifference may be rapidly transformed into insolence, and insolence into cruelty, we may well look grave at the symptoms which we can watch around us. The dreary *ennui* of the heart, *ennui* that revolts at truth, that is nauseated by earnestness, expresses itself in what we call slang, and slang is the sign of mental disease.

I have no fault to find with the broad, racy, slap-dash language of the American frontier, with its picturesque perversions and its droll exaggeration. The inspired person who chose to call a coffin an "eternity box" and whisky "blue ruin" was too innocent to sneer. The slang of Mark Twain's Mr. Scott when he goes to make arrangements for the funeral of the lamented Buck Fanshawe is excruciatingly funny and totally inoffensive. Then the story of Jim Baker and the jays in "A Tramp Abroad" is told almost entirely in frontier slang, yet it is one of the most exquisite, tender, lovable pieces of work ever set down in our tongue. The grace and fun of the story, the odd effects produced by bad grammar, the gentle humour, all combine to make this decidedly slangy chapter a literary masterpiece. A miner or ranchman will talk to you for an hour and delight you, because his slang somehow fits his peculiar thought accurately; an English sailor will tell a story, and he will use one slang word in every three that come out of his mouth, yet he is delightful, for the simple reason that his distorted dialect enables him to express and not to suppress truth. But the poison that has crept through the minds of our finer folk paralyses their utterance so far as truth is concerned; and society may be fairly caricatured by a figure of the Father of Lies blinking through an immense eyeglass upon God's universe.

Mr. George Meredith, with his usual magic insight, saw long ago whither our over-refined gentry were tending; and in one of his finest books he shows how a little dexterous slang may dwarf a noble deed. Nevil Beauchamp was under a tremendous fire with his men: he wanted to carry a wounded soldier out of action, but the soldier wished his adored officer to be saved. At the finish the two men arrived safely in their own lines amid the cheers of English, French, and even of the Russian enemy. This is how the votary of slang transfigures the episode; he wishes to make a little fun out of the hero, and he



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manages it by employing the tongue which it is good form to use. "A long-shanked trooper bearing the name of John Thomas Drew was crawling along under fire of the batteries. Out pops old Nevil, tries to get the man on his back. It won't do. Nevil insists that it's exactly one of the cases that ought to be, and they remain arguing about it like a pair of nine-pins while the Moscovites are at work with the bowls. Very well. Let me tell you my story. It's perfectly true, I give you my word. So Nevil tries to horse Drew, and Drew proposes to horse Nevil, as at school. Then Drew offers a compromise. He would much rather have crawled on, you know, and allowed the shot to pass over his head; but he's a Briton—old Nevil's the same; but old Nevil's peculiarity is that, as you are aware, he hates a compromise—won't have it—*retro Sathanas!*—and Drew's proposal to take his arm instead of being carried pick-a-or piggy-back—I am ignorant how Nevil spells it—disgusts old Nevil. Still it won't do to stop where they are, like the cocoanut and pincushion of our friends the gipsies on the downs; so they take arms and commence the journey home, resembling the best friends on the evening of a holiday in our native clime—two steps to the right, half a dozen to the left, &c. They were knocked down by the wind of a ball near the battery. 'Confound it!' cries Nevil. 'It's because I consented to a compromise!'"

Most people know that this passage refers to Rear-Admiral Maxse, yet, well as we may know our man, we have him presented like an awkward, silly, comic puppet from a show. The professor of slang could degrade the conduct of the soldiers on board the *Birkenhead*; he could make the choruses from *Samson Agonistes* seem like the Cockney puerilities of a comic news-sheet. It is this high-sniffing, supercilious slang that I attack, for I can see that it is the impudent language of a people to whom nothing is great, nothing beautiful, nothing pure, and nothing worthy of faith.

The slang of the "London season" is terrible and painful. A gloriously beautiful lady is a "rather good-looking woman—looks fairly well to-night;" a great entertainment is a "function;" a splendid ball is a "nice little dance;" high-bred, refined, and exclusive ladies and gentlemen are "smart people;" a tasteful dress is a "swagger frock;" a new craze is "the swagger thing to do." Imbecile, useless, contemptible beings, male and female, use all these verbal monstrosities under the impression that they make themselves look distinguished. A microcephalous youth whose chief intellectual relaxation consists in sucking the head of a stick thinks that his conversational style is brilliant when he calls a man a "Johnnie," a battle "a blooming slog," his lodgings his "show," a hero "a game sort of a chappie," and so on. Girls catch the infection of slang; and thus, while sweet young ladies are leading beautiful lives at Girton and Newnham,



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their sisters of society are learning to use a language which is a frail copy of the robust language of the drinking-bar and the racecourse. Under this blight lofty thought perishes, noble language also dies away, real wit is cankered and withered into a mere ghastly crackle of wordplay, humour is regarded as the sign of the savage, and generous emotion, manly love, womanly tenderness are reckoned as the folly of people whom the smart young lady of the period would describe as “Jugginses.”

As to the slang of the juniors of the middle class, it is well-nigh past description and past bearing. The dog-collared, tight-coated, horsey youth learns all the cant phrases from cheap sporting prints, and he has an idea that to call a man a “bally bounder” is quite a ducal thing to do. His hideous cackle sounds in railway-carriages, or on breezy piers by the pure sea, or in suburban roads. From the time when he gabbles over his game of Nap in the train until his last villainous howl pollutes the night, he lives, moves, and has his being in slang; and he is incapable of understanding truth, beauty, grandeur, or refinement. He is apt to label any one who does not wear a dog-collar and stableman’s trousers as a cad; but, ah, what a cad he himself is! In what a vast profound gulf of vulgarity his being wallows; and his tongue, his slang, is enough to make the spirits of the pure and just return to earth and smite him! Better by far the cunning gipsy with his glib chatter, the rough tramp with his incoherent hoarseness! All who wish to save our grand language from deterioration, all who wish to retain some savour of sincerity and manhood among us, should set themselves resolutely to talk on all occasions, great or trivial, in simple, direct, refined English. There is no need to be bookish; there is much need for being natural and sincere—and nature and sincerity are assassinated by slang.

*September, 1888.*

### *PETS.*

That enterprising savage who first domesticated the pig has a good deal to answer for. I do not say that the moral training of the pig was a distinct evil, for it undoubtedly saved many aged and respectable persons from serious inconvenience. The more practical members of the primitive tribes were wont to club the patriarchs whom they regarded as having lived long enough; and an exaggerated spirit of economy led the sons of the forest to eat their venerable relatives. The domestication of the noble animal which is the symbol of Irish prosperity caused a remarkable change in primitive public opinion. The gratified savage, conscious of possessing pigs, no longer cast the anxious eye of the epicure upon his grandmother. Thus a disagreeable habit and a disagreeable tradition were abolished, and one more step was made in the direction of universal kindness. But, while we are in some measure grateful to the first pig-tamer, we do not feel quite so sure about the first person who inveigled the cat into captivity. Mark that



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I do not speak of the “slavery” of the cat—for who ever knew a cat to do anything against its will? If you whistle for a dog, he comes with servile gestures, and almost overdoes his obedience; but, if a cat has got into a comfortable place, you may whistle for that cat until you are spent, and it will go on regarding you with a lordly blink of independence. No; decidedly the cat is not a slave. Of course I must be logical, and therefore I allow, under reasonable reservations, that a boot-jack, used as a projectile, will make a cat stir; and I have known a large garden-syringe cause a most picturesque exodus in the case of some eloquent and thoughtful cats that were holding a conference in a garden at midnight. Still I must carefully point out the fact that the boot-jack will not induce the cat to travel in any given direction for your convenience; you throw the missile, and you must wait in suspense until you know whether your cat will vanish with a wild plunge through the roof of your conservatory or bound with unwonted smartness into your favourite William pear tree. The syringe is scarcely more trustworthy in its action than the boot-jack; the parting remarks of six drenched cats are spirited and harmonious; but the animals depart to different quarters of the universe, and your hydraulic measure, so far from bringing order out of chaos, merely evokes a wailing chaos out of comparative order. These discursive observations aim at showing that a cat has a haughty spirit of independence which centuries of partial submission to the suzerainty of man have not eradicated. I do not want to censure the ancient personage who made friends with the creature which is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever to many estimable people—I reserve my judgment. Some otherwise calm and moral men regard the cat in such a light that they would go and jump on the tomb of the primeval tamer; others would erect monuments to him; so perhaps it is better that we do not know whose memory we should revere—or anathematise—the processes are reversible, according to our dispositions. Man is the paragon of animals; the cat is the paradox of animals. You cannot reason about the creature; you can only make sure that it has every quality likely to secure success in the struggle for existence; and it is well to be careful how you state your opinions in promiscuous company, for the fanatic cat-lover is only a little less wildly ferocious than the fanatical cat-hater.

Cats and pigs appear to have been the first creatures to earn the protective affection of man; but, ah, what a cohort of brutes and birds have followed! The dog is an excellent, noble, lovable animal; but the pet-dog! Alas! I seem to hear one vast sigh of genuine anguish as this Essay travels round the earth from China to Peru. I can understand the artfulness of that wily savage who first persuaded the wolf-like animal of the Asiatic plains to help him in the chase; I understand the statesmanship of



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the Thibetan shepherd who first made a wolf turn traitor to the lupine race. But who first invented the pet-dog? This impassioned question I ask with thoughts that are a very great deal too deep for tears. Consider what the existence of the pet-dog means. You visit an estimable lady, and you are greeted, almost in the hall, by a poodle, who waltzes around your legs and makes an oration like an obstructionist when the Irish Estimates are before the House. You feel that you are pale, but you summon up all your reserves of base hypocrisy and remark, "Poor fellow! Poo-poo-poo-ole fellow!" You really mean, "I should like to tomahawk you, and scalp you afterwards!"—but this sentiment you ignobly retain in your own bosom. You lift one leg in an apologetic way, and poodle instantly dashes at you with all the vehemence of a charge of his compatriots the Cuirassiers. You shut your eyes and wait for the shedding of blood; but the torturer has all the malignant subtlety of an Apache Indian, and he tantalizes you. Presently the lady of the house appears, and, finding that you are beleaguered by an ubiquitous foe, she says sweetly, "Pray do not mind Moumou; his fun gets the better of him. Go away, naughty Moumou! Did Mr. Blank frighten him then—the darling?" Fun! A pleasing sort of fun! If the rescuer had seen that dog's sanguinary rushes, she would not talk about fun. When you reach the drawing-room, there is a pug seated on an ottoman. He looks like a peculiarly truculent bull-dog that has been brought up on a lowering diet of gin-and-water, and you gain an exaggerated idea of his savagery as he uplifts his sooty muzzle. He barks with indignation, as if he thought you had come for his mistress's will, and intended to cut him off with a Spratt's biscuit. Of course he comes to smell round your ankles, and equally of course you put on a sickly smile, and take up an attitude as though you had sat down on the wrong side of a harrow. Your conversation is strained and feeble; you fail to demonstrate your affection; and, when a fussy King Charles comes up and fairly shrieks injurious remarks at you, the sense of humiliation and desertion is too severe, and you depart. Of course your hostess never attempts to control her satellites—they are quiet with her; and, even if one of them sampled the leg of a guest with a view to further business, she would be secretly pleased at such a proof of exclusive affection. We suppose that people must have something to be fond of; but why should any one be fond of a pug that is too unwieldy to move faster than a hedgehog? His face is, to say the least, not celestial—whatever his nose may be; he cannot catch a rat; he cannot swim; he cannot retrieve; he can do nothing, and his insolence to strangers eclipses the best performances of the finest and tallest Belgravian flunkeys. He is alive, and in his youth he may doubtless have been comic and engaging; but in his obese, waddling, ill-conditioned old age he is such an atrocity that one wishes a wandering Chinaman might pick him up and use him instantly after the sensible thrifty fashion of the great nation.



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I love the St. Bernard; he is a noble creature, and his beautiful life-saving instinct is such that I have seen a huge member of the breed jump off a high bridge to save a puppy which he considered to be drowning. The St. Bernard will allow a little child to lead him and to smite him on the nose without his uttering so much as a whine by way of remonstrance. If another dog attacks him, he will not retaliate by biting—that would be undignified, and like a mere bull-dog; he lies down on his antagonist and waits a little; then that other dog gets up when it has recovered breath, and, after thinking the matter over, it concludes that it must have attacked a sort of hairy traction-engine. All these traits of the St. Bernard are very sweet and engaging, and I must, moreover, congratulate him on his scientific method of treating burglars; but I do object with all the pathos at my disposal to the St. Bernard considered as a pet. His master will bring him into rooms. Now, when he is bounding about on glaciers, or infringing the Licensing Act by giving travellers brandy without scrutinizing their return-tickets, or acting as pony for frozen little boys, or doing duty as special constable when burglars pay an evening call, he is admirable; but, when he enters a room, he has all the general effects of an earthquake without any picturesque accessories. His beauty is of course praised, and, like any other big lumbering male, he is flattered; his vast tail makes a sweep like the blade of a screw-propeller, and away goes a vase. A maid brings in tea, and the St. Bernard is pleased to approve the expression of Mary's countenance; with one colossal spring he places his paws on her shoulders, and she has visions of immediate execution. Not being equal to the part of an early martyr, she observes, "Ow!" The St. Bernard regards this brief statement as a compliment, and, in an ecstasy of self-approval, he sends poor Mary staggering. Of course, when he is sent out, after causing this little excitement, he proceeds to eat anything that happens to be handy; and, as the cook does not wish to be eaten herself, she bears her bitter wrong in silence, only hoping that the two pounds of butter which the animal took as dessert may make him excessively unwell.

Now I ask any man and brother, or lady and sister, is a St. Bernard a legitimate pet in the proper sense of the word? As to the bull-dog, I say little. He at least is a good water-dog, and, when he is taught, he will retrieve birds through the heaviest sea as long as his master cares to shoot. But his appearance is sardonic, to say the least of it; he puts me in mind of a prize-fighter coming up for the tenth round when he has got matters all his own way. Happily he is not often kept as a pet; he is usually taken out by fast young men in riverside places, for his company is believed to give an air of dash and fashion to his master; and he waddles along apparently engaged in thinking out some scheme of reform for sporting circles in general. In a drawing-room he looks unnatural, and his imperturbable good humour fails to secure him favour. Dr. Jessopp tells a story of a clergyman's wife who usually kept from fifteen to twenty brindled bull-dogs; but this lady was an original character, and her mode of using a red-hot iron bar when any of her pets had an argument was marked by punctuality and despatch.



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The genuine collie is an ideal pet, but the cross-grained fleecy brutes bred for the show-bench are good neither for one thing nor another. The real, homely, ugly collie never snaps at friends; the mongrel brute with the cross of Gordon setter is not safe for an hour at a time. The real collie takes to sheep-driving by instinct; he will run three miles out and three miles in, and secure his master's property accurately after very little teaching; the present champion of all the collies would run away from a sheep as if he had seen a troop of lions. In any case, even when a collie is a genuine affectionate pet, his place is not in the house. Let him have all the open air possible, and he will remain healthy, delightful in his manners, and preternaturally intelligent. The dog of the day is the fox-terrier, and a charming little fellow he is. Unfortunately it happens that most smart youths who possess fox-terriers have an exalted idea of their friends' pugilistic powers, and hence the sweet little black, white, and tan beauty too often has life concerted into a battle and a march. Still no one who understands the fox-terrier can help respecting and admiring him. If I might hint a fault, it is that the fox-terrier lacks balance of character. The ejaculation "Cats!" causes him to behave in a way which is devoid of well-bred repose, and his conduct when in presence of rabbits is enough to make a meditative lurcher or retriever grieve. When a lurcher sees a rabbit in the daytime, he leers at him from his villainous oblique eye, and seems to say, "Shan't follow you just now—may have the pleasure of looking you up this evening." But the fox-terrier converts himself into a kind of hurricane in fur, and he gives tongue like a stump-orator in full cry. I may say that, when once the fox-terrier becomes a drawing-room pet, he loses all character—he might just as well be a pug at once. The Bedlington is perhaps the best of all terriers, but his disreputable aspect renders him rather out of place in a refined room. It is only when his deep sagacious eyes are seen that he looks attractive. He can run, swim, dive, catch rabbits, retrieve, or do anything. I grieve to say that he is a dog of an intriguing disposition; and no prudent lady would introduce him among dogs who have not learned mischief. The Bedlington seems to have the power of command, and he takes a fiendish delight in ordering young dogs to play pranks. He will whisper to a young collie, and in an instant you will see that collie chasing sheep or hens, or hunting among flower-beds, or baiting a cow, or something equally outrageous. Decidedly the Bedlington does not shine as a pet; and he should be kept only where there are plenty of things to be murdered daily—then he lives with placid joy, varied by sublime Berserker rage.



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As to feathered pets, who has not suffered from parrots? You buy a grey one at the docks, and pay four pounds for him on account of his manifold accomplishments. When he is taken home and presented to a prim lady, he of course gives her samples of the language used by the sailors on the voyage home; and, even when his morals are cured and his language is purified by discipline, he is a terrible creature. The imp lurks in his eye, and his beak—his abominable beak—is like a malicious vice. But I allow that Polly, when well behaved, gives a charming appearance to a room, and her ways are very quaint. Lonely women have amused themselves for many and many a weary hour with the antics of the pretty tropical bird; and I shall say nothing against Polly for the world.

I started with the intention of merely skirting the subject; but I find I am involved in considerations deep as society—deep as the origins of the human race. In their proper place I like all pets, with the exception of snakes. The aggressive pug is bad enough, but the snake is a thousand times worse. When possible, all boys and girls should have pets, and they should be made to tend their charges without any adult help whatever. No indirect discipline has such a humanizing effect. The unregenerate boy deprived of pets will tie kettles to dogs' tails, he will shoot at cats with catapults, he is merciless to small birds, and no one can convince him that frogs or young nestlings can feel. When he has pets, his mental horizon is widened and his kindlier instincts awakened. A boy or girl without a pet is maimed in sympathy.

Let me plead for discrimination in choice of pets. A gentleman—like the celebrated Mary—had a little lamb which he loved; but the little lamb developed into a very big and vicious ram which the owner could not find heart to kill. When this gentleman's friends were holding sweet and improving converse with him, that sheep would draw up behind his master's companion; then he would shoot out like a stone from a sling, and you would see a disconcerted guest propelled through space in a manner destructive alike to dignity and trousers. That sheep comes and butts at the front-door if he thinks his master is making too long a call; it is of no use to go and apologize for he will not take any denial, and, moreover, he will as soon ram you with his granite skull as look at you. Let the door be shut again, and the sheep seems to say, "If I don't send a panel in, you may call me a low, common goat!" and then he butts away with an enthusiasm which arouses the street. A pet of that sort is quite embarrassing, and I must respectfully beg leave to draw the line at rams. A ram is too exciting a personage for the owner's friends.

Every sign that tells of the growing love for dumb animals is grateful to my mind; for any one who has a true, kindly love for pets cannot be wholly bad. While I gently ridicule the people who keep useless brutes to annoy their neighbours, I would rather see even the hideous, useless pug kept to wheeze and snarl in his old age than see no pets at all. Good luck to all good folk who love animals, and may the reign of kindness spread!



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*March, 1888.*

### *THE ETHICS OF THE TURF.*

When Lord Beaconsfield called the Turf a vast engine of national demoralization, he uttered a broad general truth; but, unfortunately, he did not go into particulars, and his vague grandiloquence has inspired a large number of ferocious imitators, who know as little about the essentials of the matter as Lord Beaconsfield did. These imitators abuse the wrong things and the wrong people; they mix up causes and effects; they are acrid where they should be tolerant; they know nothing about the real evils; and they do no good, for the simple reason that racing blackguards never read anything, while cultured gentlemen who happen to go racing smile quietly at the blundering of amateur moralists. Sir Wilfrid Lawson is a good man and a clever man; but to see the kind of display he makes when he gets up to talk about the Turf is very saddening. He can give you an accurate statement concerning the evils of drink, but as soon as he touches racing his innocence becomes woefully apparent, and the biggest scoundrel that ever entered the Ring can afford to make game of the harmless, well-meaning critic. The subject is an intricate one, and you cannot settle it right off by talking of "pampered nobles who pander to the worst vices of the multitude;" and you go equally wrong if you begin to shriek whenever that inevitable larcenous shopboy whimpers in the dock about the temptations of betting. We are poisoned by generalities; our reformers, who use press and platform to enlighten us, resemble a doctor who should stop by a patient's bedside and deliver an oration on bad health in the abstract when he ought to be finding out his man's particular ailment. Let us clear the ground a little bit, until we can see something definite. I am going to talk plainly about things that I know, and I want to put all sentimental rubbish out of the road.

In the first place, then, horse-racing, in itself, is neither degrading nor anything else that is bad; a race is a beautiful and exhilarating spectacle, and quiet men, who never bet, are taken out of themselves in a delightful fashion when the exquisite thoroughbreds thunder past. No sensible man supposes for a moment that owners and trainers have any deliberate intention of improving the breed of horses, but, nevertheless, these splendid tests of speed and endurance undoubtedly tend indirectly to produce a fine breed, and that is worth taking into account. The Survival of the Fittest is the law that governs racing studs; the thought and observation of clever men are constantly exercised with a view to preserving excellence and eliminating defects, so that, little by little, we have contrived, in the course of a century, to approach equine perfection. If a twelve-stone man were put up on Bendigo, that magnificent animal could give half a mile start to any Arab steed that ever was foaled, and run away from the Arab at the finish of a four-mile course. Weight need not be considered,

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for if the Eastern-bred horse only carried a postage-stamp the result would be much about the same. Minting could carry fourteen stone across a country, while, if we come to mere speed, there is really no knowing what horses like Ormonde, Energy, Prince Charlie, and others might have done had they been pressed. If the Emir of Hail were to bring over fifty of his best mares, the Newmarket trainers could pick out fifty fillies from among their second-rate animals, and the worst of the fillies could distance the best of the Arabs on any terms; while, if fifty heats were run off, over any courses from half a mile to four miles, the English horses would not lose one. The champion Arab of the world was matched against one of the worst thoroughbreds in training; the English “plater” carried about five stone more than the pride of the East, and won by a quarter of a mile.

Unconsciously, the breeders of racers have been evolving for us the swiftest, strongest, and most courageous horse known to the world, and we cannot afford to neglect that consideration, for people will not strive after perfection unless perfection brings profit.

Again, we hear occasionally a good deal of outcry about the great noblemen and gentlemen who keep up expensive studs, and the assumption is that racehorses and immorality go together; but what would the critics have the racing nobleman do? He is born into a strange artificial society; his fate is ready-made for him; he inherits luxuries and pastimes as he inherits land and trees. Say that the stud is a useless luxury: but then, what about the daubs for which plutocrats pay thousands of guineas? A picture costs, let us say, 2,000 guineas; it is the slovenly work of a hurried master, and the guineas are paid for a name; it is stuck away in a private gallery, and, if its owner looks at it so often as once a week, it costs him L2 per peep—reckoning only the interest on the money sunk. Is that useless luxury? The fact is that we are living in a sort of guarded hothouse; our barbarian propensities cannot have an easy outlet; and luxury of all sorts tends to lull our barbarian energy. If we blame one man for indulging a costly hobby, we must blame almost every man and woman who belongs to the grades above the lower middle-class. A rich trader who spends L5,000 a year on orchid-houses cannot very well afford to reprove a man who pays 50s. per week for each of a dozen horses in training. Rich folk, whose wealth has been fostered during the long security of England, will indulge in superfluities, and no one can stop them. A country gentleman who succeeds to a deer park cannot slaughter all the useless, pretty creatures merely because they *are* useless: he is bound by a thousand traditions, and he cannot suddenly break away. A nobleman inherits a colossal income, of which he cannot very well rid himself: he follows the traditions of his family or his class, and employs part of his profuse surplus riches in maintaining



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a racing stud; how can any one find fault with him? Such a man as Lord Hartington would never dream of betting except in a languid, off-hand way. He (and his like) are fond of watching the superb rush of the glossy horses; they want the freedom, the swift excitement of the breezy heath; our society encourages them to amuse themselves, and they do so with a will. That is all. It may be wrong for A and B and C to own superfluous wealth, but then the fact is there—that they have got it, and the community agree that they may expend the superfluity as they choose. The rich man's stud gives wholesome employment to myriads of decent folks in various stations of life—farmers, saddlers, blacksmiths, builders, corn dealers, road-makers, hedgers, farriers, grooms, and half a score other sorts of toilers derive their living from feeding, harnessing, and tending the horses, and the withdrawal of such a sportsman as Mr. "Abington" from Newmarket would inflict a terrible blow on hundreds of industrious persons who lead perfectly useful and harmless lives. My point is, that racing (as racing) is in no way noxious; it is the most pleasant of all excitements, and it gives bread to many praiseworthy citizens. I have seen 5,000 given for a Latin hymn-book, and, when I pondered on the ghastly, imbecile selfishness of that purchase, I thought that I should not have mourned very much if the money had been laid out on a dozen smart colts and fillies, for, at least, the horses would have ultimately been of some use, even if they all had been put to cab-work. We must allow that when racing is a hobby, it is quite respectable—as hobbies go. One good friend of mine, whose fortune has been made by shrewd judgment and constant work, always keeps five or six racers in training. He goes from meeting to meeting with all the eagerness of a boy; his friends sturdily maintain that his stud is composed of "hair trunks," and the animals certainly have an impressively uniform habit of coming in last. But the good owner has his pleasure; his hobby satisfies him; and, when he goes out in the morning to watch his yearlings frolicking, he certainly never dreams that he is fostering an immoral institution. Could we only have racing—and none of the hideous adjuncts—I should be glad, in spite of all the moralists who associate horse-flesh with original sin.

As to the bookmakers, I shall have much to say further on. At present I am content with observing that the quiet, respectable bookmaker is as honourable and trustworthy as any trafficker in stocks and shares, and his business is almost identical with that of the stockjobber in many respects. No class of men adhere more rigidly to the point of honour than bookmakers of the better sort, and a mere nod from one of them is as binding to him as the most elaborate of parchments. They are simply shrewd, audacious tradesmen, who know that most people are fools, and make their profit out of that knowledge. It is painful to hear an ignorant man abusing a bookmaker



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who does no more than use his opportunities skilfully. Why not abuse the gentry who buy copper to catch the rise of the market? Why not abuse the whole of the thousands of men who make the City lively for six days of the week? Is there any rational man breathing who would scruple to accept profit from the rise of a stock or share? If I, practically, back South-Eastern Railway shares to rise, who blames me if I sell when my property has increased in value by one-eighth? My good counsellor, Mr. Ruskin, who is the most virulent enemy of usury, is nevertheless very glad that his father bought Bank of England shares, which have now been converted into Stock, and stand at over 300; Ruskin senior was a shrewd speculator, who backed his fancy; and a bookmaker does the same in a safer way. Bookmaking is a business which is carried out in its higher branches with perfect sobriety, discretion, and probity; the gambling element does not come in on the bookmaker's side, but he deals with gamblers in a fair way. They know that he will lay them the shortest odds he can; they know that they put their wits against his, and they also know that he will pay them with punctilious accuracy if they happen to beat him in the encounter of brains. Three or four of the leading betting men "turn over" on the average about half a million each per annum; one firm who bet on commission receive an average of five thousand pounds per day to invest, and the vouchers of all these speculators and agents are as good as bank notes. Mark that I grant the certainty of the bookmakers winning; they can remain idle in their mansions for months in the year, and the great gambling public supply the means; but I do not find fault with the bookmakers because they use their opportunities, or else I might rave about the iniquity of a godly man who earns in a week 100,000 from a "corner" in tin, or I might reprobate the quack who makes no less than 7000 per cent on every box of pills that he sells. A good man once chatted with me for a whole evening, and all his talk ran on his own luck in "spotting" shares that were likely to move upward. Certainly his luck as a gambler had been phenomenal. I turned the conversation to the Turf case of Wood v. Cox, and the torrent of eloquence which met me was enough to drown my intellect in its whirl and rush. My friend was great on the iniquity of gaming and racing, and I rather fancy that he proposed to play on the Betting Ring with a mitrailleuse if ever he had the power. I know he was most sanguinary—and I smiled. He never for an instant seemed to think that he was exactly like a backer of horses, and I have no doubt but that his density is shared by a few odd millions here and there. The stockbroker is a kind of bookmaker, and the men and women who patronise both and make their wealth are fools who all may be lumped under the same heading. I knew of one outside-broker—a mere bucket-shop keeper—who keeps 600 clerks constantly employed. That seems to point out rather an extensive gambling business.



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And now I have tried to clear the ground on one hand a little, and my last and uttermost good word has been said for the Turf. With sorrow I say that, after all excuses are made, the cool observer must own that it is indeed a vast engine of national demoralization, and the subtle venom which it injects into the veins of the Nation creeps along through channels of which Lord Beaconsfield never dreamed. I might call the Turf a canker, but a canker is only a local ailment, whereas the evils of betting have now become constitutional so far as the State is concerned. If we cut out the whole tribe of bookmakers and betting-agents, and applied such cautery as would prevent any similar growth from arising in the place wherefrom we excised them, we should do very little good; for the life-blood of Britain is tainted, and no superficial remedy can cure her now. I shut my eyes on the bookmakers, and I only spare attention for the myriads who make the bookmakers' existence possible—who would evolve new bookmakers from their midst if we exterminated the present tribe to-morrow. It is not the professional bettors who cause the existence of fools; it is the insensate fools who cause the existence of professional bettors.

Gambling used to be mainly confined to the upper classes; it is now a raging disease among that lower middle-class which used to form the main element of our national strength, and the tradesman whose cart comes to your area in the morning gambles with all the reckless abandonment that used to be shown by the Hon. A. Deuceace or Lady Betty when George the Third was King. Your clerk, shopman, butcher, baker, barber—especially the barber—ask their companions, "What have you done on the Lincoln?" or "How do you stand for the Two Thousand?" just as ordinary folks ask after each other's health. Tradesmen step out of their shops in the morning and telegraph to their bookmaker just as they might to one of their wholesale houses; there is not a town in broad England which has not its flourishing betting men, and some very small towns can maintain two or three. The bookmakers are usually publicans, barbers, or tobacconists; but whatever they are they invariably drive a capital trade. In the corner of a smoking-room you may see a quiet, impassive man sitting daily in a contemplative manner; he does not drink much; he smokes little, and he appears to have nothing in particular to worry him. If he knows you well, he will scarcely mind your presence; men (and boys) greet him, and little, gentle colloquies take place from time to time; the smartest man could detect nothing, and yet the noiseless, placid gentleman of the smoking-room registers thirty or forty bets in a day. That is one type which I have watched for hours, days, months. There are dozens of other types, but I need not attempt to sketch them; it is sufficient to say that the poison has taken hard hold on us, and that I see every symptom of a national decadence.



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Some one may say, "But you excused the Turf and the betting men." Exactly. I said that racing is a delightful pastime to those who go to watch good horses gallop; the miserable thing to me is seeing the wretches who do not care for racing at all, but only care for gambling on names and numbers. Let Lord Hartington, Lord Randolph Churchill, Mr. Chaplin, Mr. Corlett, Mr. Rothschild, Lord Rosebery, and the rest, go and see the lovely horses shooting over the turf; by all means let them watch their own colts and fillies come flying home. But the poor creatures who muddle away brains, energy, and money on what *they* are pleased to term sport, do not know a horse from a mule; they gamble, as I have said, on names; the splendid racers give them no enjoyment such as the true sportsman derives, for they would not know Ormonde from a Clydesdale. To these forlorn beings only the ignoble side of racing is known; it is sacrilege to call them sportsmen; they are rotting their very souls and destroying the remnants of their manhood over a game which they play blindfold. It is pitiful—most pitiful. No good-natured man will begrudge occasional holiday-makers their chance of seeing a good race. Rural and industrial Yorkshire are represented by thousands at Doncaster, on the St. Ledger day, and the tourists get no particular harm; they are horsey to the backbone, and they come to see the running. They criticize the animals and gain topics for months of conversation, and, if they bet an odd half-crown and never go beyond it, perhaps no one is much the worse. When the Duke of Portland allowed his tenantry to see St. Simon gallop five years ago at Newcastle, the pitmen and artisans thronged to look at the horse. There was no betting whatever, because no conceivable odds could have measured the difference between St. Simon and his opponent, yet when Archer let the multitude see how fast a horse *could* travel, and the great thoroughbred swept along like a flash, the excitement and enthusiasm rose to fever-pitch. Those men had an unaffected pleasure in observing the beauty and symmetry and speed of a noble creature, and they were unharmed by the little treat which the good-natured magnate provided for them. It is quite otherwise with the mob of stay-at-home gamblers; they do not care a rush for the horses; they long, with all the crazy greed of true dupes, to gain money without working for it, and that is where the mischief comes in. Cupidity, mean anxieties, unwholesome excitements, gradually sap the morality of really sturdy fellows—the last shred of manliness is torn away, and the ordinary human intelligence is replaced by repulsive vulpine cunning. If you can look at a little group of the stay-at-homes while they are discussing the prospects of a race, you will see something that Hogarth would have enjoyed in his large, lusty fashion. The fair human soul no longer shines through those shifty, deceitful eyes; the men have, somehow, sunk from the



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level of their race, and they make you think that Swift may-have been right after all. From long experience I am certain that if a cultured gentleman, accustomed to high thinking, were suddenly compelled to live among these dismal beings, he would be attacked by a species of intellectual paralysis. The affairs of the country are nothing to them; poetry, art, and all beautiful things are contemptible in their eyes; they dwell in an obscure twilight of the mind, and their relaxation, when the serious business of betting is put aside for awhile, mostly lies in the direction of sheer bawdry and abomination. It is curious to see the oblique effect which general degradation has upon the vocabulary of these people; quiet words, or words that express a plain meaning, are repugnant to them; even the old-fashioned full-mouthed oaths of our fathers are tame to their fancy, for they must have something strongly spiced, and thus they have by degrees fitted themselves up with a loathly dialect of their own which transcends the comparatively harmless efforts of the Black Country potter. Foul is not the word for this ultra-filthy mode of talk—it passes into depths below foulness. I may digress for a little to emphasize this point. The latter-day hanger-on of the Turf has introduced a new horror to existence. Go into the Silver Ring at a suburban meeting, and listen while two or three of the fellows work themselves into an ecstasy of vile excitement, then you will hear something which cannot be described or defined in any terms known to humanity. Why it should be so I cannot tell, but the portentous symptom of putridity is always in evidence. As is the man of the Ring, so are the stay-at-homes. The disease of their minds is made manifest by their manner of speech; they throw out verbal pustules which tell of the rank corruption which has overtaken their nature, and you need some seasoning before you can remain coolly among them without feeling symptoms of nausea. There is one peer of this realm—a hereditary legislator and a patron of many Church livings—who is famous for his skill in the use of certain kinds of vocables. This man is a living exemplar of the mysterious effect which low dodging and low distractions have on the soul. In five minutes he can make you feel as if you had tumbled into one of Swedenborg's loathsome hells; he can make the most eloquent of turf thieves feel, envious, and he can make you awe-stricken as you see how far and long God bears with man. The disease from which this pleasing pillar of the State suffers has spread, with more or less virulence, to the furthestmost recesses of our towns, and you must know the fringe of the Turf world before you can so much as guess what the symptoms are like.



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Here is a queer kind of a world which has suddenly arisen! Faith and trust are banished; real honesty is unknown; purity is less than a name; manliness means no more than a certain readiness to use the fists. Most of the dwellers in this atmosphere are punctilious about money payments because they durst not be otherwise, but the fine flower of real probity does not flourish in the mephitic air. To lie, to dodge, to take mean advantages—these are the accomplishments which an ugly percentage of middle-class youths cultivate, and all the mischief arises from the fact that they persist in trying to ape the manners of the most unworthy members of an order to which they do not belong. It is bad enough when a rich and idle man is bitten with the taste for betting, but when he is imitated by the tailor's assistant who carries his clothes home, then we have a still more unpleasant phenomenon to consider. For it is fatal to a nation when any large and influential section of the populace once begin to be confused in their notions of right and wrong. Not long ago I was struck by noticing a significant instance of this moral dry rot. An old racing man died, and all the sporting papers had something to say about him and his career. Now the best of the sporting journalists are clever and cultured gentlemen, who give refinement, to every subject that they touch. But a certain kind of writing is done by pariahs, who are not much of a credit to our society, and I was interested by the style in which these scribbling vermin spoke of the dead man. Their gush was a trifle nauseating; their mean worship of money gave one a shiver, and the relish with which they described their hero's exploits would have been comic were it not for the before-mentioned nausea.

It seemed that the departed turfite had been—to use blunt English—a very skilful and successful swindler. He would buy a horse which took his fancy, and he would run the animal again and again, until people got tired of seeing such a useless brute taken down to the starting-point. The handicappers finally let our schemer's horse in at a trifling weight, and then he prepared for business. He had trustworthy agents at Manchester, Nottingham, and Newcastle, and these men contrived, without rousing suspicion, to “dribble” money into the market in a stealthy way, until the whole of their commission was worked on very advantageous terms. The arch-plotter did not show prominently in the transaction, and he contrived once or twice to throw dust in the eyes of the very cleverest men. One or two neatly arranged strokes secured our acute gentleman a handsome fortune. He missed £70,000 once, by a short head, but this was the only instance in which his plans seriously failed; and he was looked up to as an epitome of all the virtues which are most acceptable in racing circles. Well, had this dodger exhibited the heroism of Gordon, the benevolence of Lord Shaftesbury, the probity of Henry Fawcett, he could not have been more bepraised



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and bewailed by the small fry of sporting literature. All he had done in life was to deceive people by making them fancy that certain good horses were bad ones: strictly speaking, he made money by false pretences, and yet, such is the twist given by association with genuine gamblers, that educated men wrote of him as if he had been a saint of the most admirable order. This disposition is seen all through the piece: successful roguery is glorified, and our young men admire “the Colonel,” or “the Captain,” or Jack This and Tom That, merely because the Captain and the Colonel and Jack and Tom are acute rascals who have managed to make money. Decidedly, our national ideals are in a queer way. Just think of a little transaction which occurred in 1887. A noble lord ordered a miserable jockey boy to pull a horse, so that the animal might lose a race: the exalted guide of youth was found out, and deservedly packed off the Turf; but it was only by an accident that the Stewards were able to catch him. That legislator had funny notions of the duty which he owed to boyhood: he asked his poor little satellite to play the scoundrel, and he only did what scores do who are *not* found out.

A haze hangs about the Turf, and all the principles which should guide human nature are blurred and distorted; the high-minded, honourable racing men can do nothing or next to nothing, and the scum work their will in only too many instances. Every one knows that the ground is palpitating with corruption, but our national mental disease has so gained ground that some regard corruption in a lazy way as being inevitable, while others—including the stay-at-home horse-racers—reckon it as absolutely admirable.

Some years ago, a pretty little mare was winning the St. Leger easily, when a big horse cut into her heels and knocked her over. About two months afterwards, the same wiry little mare was running in an important race at Newmarket, and at the Bushes she was hauling her jockey out of the saddle. There were not many spectators about, and only a few noticed that, while the mare was fighting for her head, she was suddenly pulled until she reared up, lost her place, and reached the post about seventh in a large field. The jockey who rode the mare, and who made her exhibit circus gambols, received a thousand pounds from the owner of the winning horse. Now, there was no disguise about this transaction—nay, it was rather advertised than otherwise, and a good many of the sporting prints took it quite as a matter of course. Why? Simply because no prominent racing man raked up the matter judicially, and because the ordinary Turf scramblers accept suspicious proceedings as part of their environment. Mr. Carlyle mourned over the deadly virus of lying which was emitted by Loyola and his crew; he might mourn now over the deadly virus of cheating which is emitted from the central ganglia of the Turf. The upright men who love horses and love racing are nearly powerless; the thieves leaven the country, and they have reduced what was once the finest middle-class in the world to a condition of stark putridity.



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Before we can rightly understand the degradation which has befallen us by reason of the Turf, we must examine the position of jockeys in the community. Lord Beaconsfield, in one of his most wicked sentences, said that the jockey is our Western substitute for the eunuch; a noble duke, who ought to know something about the matter, lately informed the world through the medium of a court of law with an oath that "jockeys are thieves." Now, I know one jockey whose character is not embraced by the duke's definition, and I have heard that there are two, but I am not acquainted with the second man. The wonder is, considering the harebrained, slaving folly of the public, that any of the riding manikins are half as honest as they are; the wonder is that their poor little horsey brains are not led astray in such fashion as to make every race a farce. They certainly do try their best on occasion, and I believe that there are many races which are *not* arranged before the start; but you cannot persuade the picked men of the rascals' corps that any race is run fairly. When Melton and Paradox ran their tremendous race home in the Derby, I heard quite a number of intelligent gentry saying that Paradox should have won but for the adjectived and participle propensities of his jockey. Nevertheless, although most devout turfites agree with the emphatic duke, they do not idolize their diminutive fetishes a whit the less; they worship the manikin with a touching and droll devotion, and, when they know him to be a confirmed scamp, they admire his cleverness, and try to find out which way the little rogue's interest lies, so that they may follow him. So it comes about that we have amidst us a school of skinny dwarfs whose leaders are paid better than the greatest statesmen in Europe. The commonest jockey-boy in this company of manikins can usually earn more than the average scholar or professional man, and the whole set receive a good deal more of adulation than has been bestowed on any soldier, sailor, explorer, or scientific man of our generation. And what is the life-history of the jockey? A tiny boy is bound apprentice, and submitted to the discipline of a training stable; he goes through the long routine of morning gallops, trials, and so forth, and when he begins to show signs of aptitude he is put up to ride for his master in public. If he is a born horseman, like Archer or Robinson, he may make his mark long before his indentures are returned to him, and he is at once surrounded by a horde of flatterers who do their best to spoil him. There is no cult so distinguished by slavishness, by gush, by lavishness, as jockey-worship, and a boy needs to have a strong head and sound, careful advisers, if he is to escape becoming positively insufferable. When the lad Robinson won the St. Leger, after his horse had been left at the post, he was made recipient of the most frantic and silly toadyism that the mind can conceive; the clever trainer to whom he was apprenticed

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received L1,500 for transferring the little fellow's services, and he is now a celebrity who probably earns a great deal more than Professor Owen or Mr. Walter Besant. The tiny boy who won the Cesarevitch on Don Juan received L1,000 after the race, and it must be remembered that this child had not left school. Mr. Herbert Spencer has not earned L1,000 by the works that have altered the course of modern thought; the child Martin picked up the amount in a lump, after he had scurried for less than five minutes on the back of a feather-weighted thoroughbred. As the jockey grows older and is freed from his apprenticeship he becomes a more and more important personage; if his weight keeps well within limits he can ride four or five races every day during the season; he draws five guineas for a win, and three for the mount, and he picks up an infinite number of unconsidered trifles in the way of presents, since the turfite, bad or good, is invariably a cheerful giver. The popular jockey soon has his carriages, his horses, his valet, and his sumptuous house; noblemen, millionaires, great dames, and men and women of all degrees conspire to pamper him: for jockey-worship, when it is once started, increases in intensity by a sort of geometrical progression. A shrewd man of the world may smile grimly when he hears that a popular rider was actually received with royal honours and installed in the royal box when he went to the theatre during his honeymoon, but there are the facts. It was so, and the best people of the fine town in which this deplorable piece of toadyism was perpetrated were tolerably angry at the time. If the sporting journalists perform their work of puffery with skill and care, the worship of the jockey reaches a pitch that borders on insanity. If General Gordon had returned and visited such a place as Liverpool or Doncaster during a race-meeting, he would not have been noticed by the discriminating crowd if Archer had passed along the street. If the Prime Minister were to visit any place of public resort while Watts or Webb happened to be there, it is probable that his lordship would learn something useful concerning the relative importance of Her Majesty's subjects. I know for a fact that a cleverly executed cartoon of Archer, Fordham, Wood, or Barrett will have at least six times as many buyers as a similar portrait of Professor Tyndall, Mr. James Payn, M. Pasteur, Lord Salisbury, Mr. Chamberlain, or any one in Britain excepting Mr. Gladstone. I do not know how many times the *Vanity Fair* cartoon of Archer has been reprinted, but I learn on good authority that, for years, not a single day has been known to pass on which the caricature was not asked for. And now let us bring to mind the plain truth that these jockeys are only uneducated and promoted stable-boys after all. Is it not a wonder that we can pick out a single honest man from their midst? Vast sums depend on their exertions, and they are surrounded by a huge crowd of moneyed men who will stand at nothing



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if they can gain their ends; their unbalanced, sharp little minds are always open to temptation; they see their brethren amassing great fortunes, and they naturally fall into line and proceed, when their turn comes, to grab as much money as they can. Not long ago the inland revenue officials, after minute investigation, assessed the gains of one wee creature at L9,000 per year. This pigmy is now twenty-six years of age, and he earned as much as the Lord Chancellor, and more than any other judge, until a jury decided his fate by giving him what the Lord Chief Justice called "a contemptuous verdict." Another jockey paid income-tax on L10,000 a year, and a thousand pounds is not at all an uncommon sum to be paid merely as a retainer. Forty or fifty years ago a jockey would not have dreamed of facing his employer otherwise than cap in hand, but the value of stable-boys has gone up in the market, and Lear's fool might now say, "Handy-Dandy! Who is your jockey now and who is your master?" The little men gradually gather a kind of veneer of good manners, and some of them can behave very much like pocket editions of gentlemen, but the scent of the stable remains, and, whether the jockey is a rogue or passably honest, he remains a stable-boy to the end. Half the mischief on the Turf arises from the way in which these overpaid, spoilt menials can be bribed, and, certes, there are plenty of bribers ready. Racing men do not seem able to shake off the rule of their stunted tyrants. When the gentleman who paid income-tax on nine thousand a year brought the action which secured him the contemptuous verdict, the official handicapper to the Jockey Club declared on oath that the jockey's character was "as bad as bad can be." The starter and a score of other witnesses followed in the same groove, and yet this man was freely employed. Why? We may perhaps explain by inference presently.

With this cynically corrupt corps of jockeys and their hangers-on, it may easily be seen that the plutocrats who manipulate the Turf wires have an admirable time of it, while the great gaping mob of zanies who go to races, and zanies who stay at home, are readily bled by the fellows who have the money and the "information" and the power. The rule of the Turf is easily formulated:—"Get the better of your neighbour. Play the game outwardly according to fair rules. Pay like a man if your calculations prove faulty, but take care that they shall be as seldom faulty as possible. Never mind what you pay for information if it gives you a point the better of other men. Keep your agents honest if you can, but, if they happen to be dishonest under pressure of circumstances, take care at any rate that you are not found out." In short, the Ring is mainly made up of men who pay with scrupulous honesty when they lose, but who take uncommonly good care to reduce the chances of losing to a minimum. Are they in the wrong? It depends. I shall not, at the present moment, go into details; I prefer to pause

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and ask what can be expected to result from the wolfish scheme of Turf morality which I have indicated. I do not compare it with the rules which guide our host of commercial middlemen, because, if I did, I should say that the betting men have rather the best of the comparison: I keep to the Turf, and I want to know what broad consequences must emanate from a body which organizes plans for plunder and veils them under the forms of honesty. An old hand—the Odysseus of racing—once said to me: “No man on earth would ever be allowed to take a hundred thousand pounds out of the Ring: they wouldn’t allow it, they wouldn’t That young fool must drop all he’s got.” We were speaking about a youthful madman who was just then being plucked to the last feather, and I knew that the old turfite was right. The Ring is a close body, and I have only known about four men who ever managed to beat the confederacy in the long run. There is one astute, taciturn, inscrutable organizer whom the bookmakers dread a little, because he happens to use their own methods; he will scheme for a year or two if necessary until he succeeds in placing a horse advantageously, and he usually brings off his *coup* just at the time when the Ring least like it. “They don’t yell like that when one of mine rolls home,” he once said, while the bookmakers were clamouring with delight over the downfall of a favourite; and indeed this wily master of deceptions has very often made the pencillers draw long faces. But the case of the Turf Odysseus is not by any means typical; the man stands almost alone, and his like will not be seen again for many a day. The rule is that the backer must come to grief in the long run, for every resource of chicanery, bribery, and resolute keenness is against him. He is there to be plundered; it is his mission in life to lose, or how could the bookmakers maintain their mansions and carriages? It matters little what the backer’s capital may be at starting, he will lose it all if he is idiot enough to go on to the end, for he is fighting against unscrupulous legions. One well-known bookmaker coolly announced in 1888 that he had written off three hundred thousand pounds of bad debts. Consider what a man’s genuine business must be like when he can jauntily allude to three hundred thousands as a bagatelle by the way. That same man has means of obtaining “information” sufficient to discomfit any poor gambler who steps into the Ring and expects to beat the bookmakers by downright above-board dealing. As soon as he begins to lay heavily against a horse the animal is regarded as doomed to lose by all save the imbeciles who persist in hoping against hope. In 1889 this betting man made a dead set at the favourite for the Two Thousand Guineas. The colt was known to be the best of his year; he was trained in a stable which has the best of reputations; his exercise was uninterrupted, and mere amateurs fancied they had only to lay heavy odds *on* him in order to put



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down three pounds and pick up four. Yet the inexorable bookmaker kept on steadily taking the odds; the more he betted, the more money was piled on to the unbeaten horse, and yet few took warning, although they must have seen that the audacious financier was taking on himself an appalling risk. Well, the peerless colt was pulled out, and, on his way to the starting post, he began to shake blood and matter from his jaws; he could hardly move in the race, and when he was taken to his quarters a surgeon let out yet another pint of pus from the poor beast's jaw. Observe that the shrewdest trainer in England, a crowd of stable-boys, the horse's special attendant, the horse-watchers at Kingsclere, and the casual strangers who saw the favourite gallop—all these knew nothing apparently about that monstrous abscess, and no one suspected that the colt's jaw had been splintered. But "information"—always information—evidently reached one quarter, and the host of outsiders lost their money. Soon afterwards a beautiful colt that had won the Derby was persistently backed for the City and Suburban Handicap. On paper it seemed as if the race might be regarded as over, for only the last year's Derby winner appeared to have a chance; but our prescient penciller cared nothing about paper. Once more he did not trouble himself about betting to figures; he must have laid his book five times over before the flag fell. Then the nincompoops who refused to attend to danger-signals saw that the beautiful colt which had spun over the same course like a greyhound only ten months before was unable to gallop at all. The unhappy brute tried for a time, and was then mercifully eased; the bookmaker would have lost L100,000 if his "information" had not been accurate, but that is just the crux—it was. So admirably do the bookmakers organize their intelligence department that I hardly know more than three instances in which they have blundered after they really began to lay fiercely against a horse. They contrive to buy jockeys, stablemen, veterinary surgeons—indeed, who can tell whom they do *not* subsidize? When Belladrum came striding from the fateful hollow in front of Pretender, there was one "leviathan" bookmaker who turned green and began to gasp, for he stood to lose L50,000; but the "leviathan" was spared the trouble of fainting, for the hill choked the splendid Stockwell horse, and "information" was once more vindicated, while Belladrum's backers paid copious tribute. Just two years before the leviathan had occasion to turn green our Turf Odysseus really did manage to deceive the great betting corporation with consummate skill. The whole business throws such a clear light on Turf ethics that I may repeat it for the benefit of those who know little about our great national sport—the Sport of Kings. It was rumoured that Hermit had broken a blood-vessel, and the animal was stopped for a little in his work. Then Odysseus and his chief confederate proceeded to seize their chance. The horse started at 1000 to 15, and it seemed like a million to one against him, for his rough coat had been left on him, and he looked a ragged equine invalid. The invalid won, however, by a neck, the Marquis of Hastings was ruined, and the confederates won about L150,000.



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As we go over these stories of plot and counterplot, it is hardly possible to avoid thinking what a singularly high-souled set of gentry we have got amongst. What ambitions! To trick money out of somebody's pocket! To wager when you know that you have made winning certain! The outcome of it all is that, in the unequal battle between the men who back and the men who lay, the latter must win; they *will* win, even if they have to cog the dice on a pinch; and, moreover, they will not be found out officially, even though their "secret" is as open as if it were written across the sky. A strange, hard, pitiless crew are these same bookmakers. Personally, strange to say, they are, in private life, among the most kindly and generous of men; their wild life, with its excitement and hurry, and keen encounters of wits, never seems to make them anything but thoughtful and liberal when distress has to be aided; but the man who will go far out of his way to perform a charitable action will take your very skin from you if you engage him in that enclosure which is his battle-ground, and he will not be very particular as to whether he wins your skin by fair means or foul.

About two years ago, an exasperating, soft-headed boy brought a colossal fortune into the Ring. I never pitied him much; I only longed to see him placed in the hands of a good schoolmaster who knew how to use a birch. This piteous wretch, with his fatuous airs of sharpness, was exactly the kind of game that the bookmakers cared to fly at; he was cajoled and stimulated; he was trapped at every turn; the vultures flapped round him; and there was no strong, wise man to give the booby counsel or to drag him by main force from his fate. There was no pity for the boy's youth; he was a mark for every obscene bird of prey that haunts the Turf; respectable betting men gave him fair play, though they exacted their pound of flesh; the birds of Night gave him no fair play at all. In a few short months he had poured a quarter of a million into the bursting pockets of the Ring, and he was at last "posted" for the paltry sum of L1,400. This tragic farce was not enacted in a corner; a hundred journals printed every act as it was played; the victim never received that one hearty flogging which might have saved him, and the curtain was at last rung down on a smug, grinning group of bookmakers, a deservedly ruined spendthrift, and a mob of indifferent lookers-on. So minutely circumstantial were the newspapers, that we may say that all England saw a gigantic robbery being committed, and no man, on the Turf or off, interfered by so much as a sign. Decidedly, the Ethics of the Turf offer an odd study for the moralist; and, in passing, I may say that the national ethics are also a little queer. We ruin a tradesman who lets two men play a game at billiards for sixpence on licensed premises, and we allow a silly boy to be rooked of a quarter of a million in nine months, although the robbery is as well-known as if it were advertised over the whole front page of *The Times* day by day.



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In sum, then, we have an inner circle of bookmakers who take care either to bet on figures alone, or on perfectly accurate and secret information; we have another circle of sharp owners and backers, who, by means of modified (or unmodified) false pretences, succeed at times in beating the bookmakers; we have then an outer circle, composed partly of stainless gentlemen who do not bet and who want no man's money, partly of perfectly honest fellows who have no judgment, no real knowledge, and no self-restraint, and who serve as prey on which the bookmakers batten.

And then we have circle on circle showing every shade of vice, baseness, cupidity, and blank folly. First, I may glance—and only glance—at the unredeemed, hopeless villains who are the immediate hangers-on of the Turf. People hardly believe that there are thousands of sturdy, able-bodied men scattered among our great towns and cities who have never worked, and who never mean to work. In their hoggish way they feed well and lie warm—the phrase is their own favourite—and they subsist like odious reptiles, fed from mysterious sources. Go to any suburban race meeting (I don't care which you pick) and you will fancy that Hell's tatterdemalions have got holiday. Whatsoever things are vile, whatsoever things are roguish, bestial, abominable, belong to the racecourse loafers. To call them thieves is to flatter them, for their impudent knavery transcends mere thieving; they have not a virtue; they are more than dangerous, and, if ever there comes a great social convulsion, they will let us know of their presence in an awkward fashion, for they are trained to riot, fraud, bestiality, and theft, on the fringe of the racecourse.

Then comes the next line of predatory animals who suck the blood of the dupes. If you look at one of the daily sporting papers you will see, on the most important page, a number of flaming announcements, which will make very comic reading for you if you have any sense of humour at all. Gentlemen, who usually take the names of well-known jockeys or trainers, offer to make your fortune on the most ridiculously easy terms. You forward a guinea or half-a-guinea, and an obliging prophet will show you how to ruin the bookmakers. Old Tom Tompkins has a "glorious success" every week; Joe, and Bill, and Harry, and a good score more, are always ready to prove that they named the winner of any given race; one of these fellows advertises under at least a dozen different names, and he is able to live in great style and keep a couple of secretaries, although he cannot write a letter or compose a circular. The *Sporting Times* will not allow one of these vermin to advertise in its columns, and it has exposed all their dodges in the most conclusive and trenchant set of articles that I ever saw; but other journals admit the advertisements at prices which seem well-nigh prohibitive, and they are content to draw from L15 to L20 per day by blazoning



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forth false pretences. I have had much fun out of these “tipsters,” for they are deliciously impudent blackguards. A fellow will send you the names of six horses—all losers; in two days he will advertise—“I beg to congratulate all my patrons. This week I was in great form on the whole, and on Thursday I sent all six winners. A thousand pounds will be paid to any one who can disprove this statement.” Considering that the sage sent you six losers on the Thursday, you naturally feel a little surprised at his tempestuously confident challenge. All the seers are alike; they pick names at haphazard from the columns of the newspapers, and then they pretend to be in possession of the darkest stable secrets. If they are wrong, and they usually are, they advertise their own infallibility all the more brazenly. I do not exactly know what getting money under false pretences may be if the proceedings which I have described do not come under that heading, and I wonder what the police think of the business. They very soon catch a poor Rommany wench who tells fortunes, and she goes to gaol for three months. But I suppose that the Rommany rawnee does not contribute to the support of influential newspapers. A sharp detective ought to secure clear cases against at least a dozen of these parasites in a single fortnight, for they are really stupid in essentials. One of the brotherhood always sets forth his infallible prophecies from a dark little public-house bar near Fountain Court. I have seen him, when I came off a journey, trying to steady his hand at seven in the morning; his twisted, tortured fingers could hardly hold the pencil, and he was fit for nothing but to sit in the stinking dusk and soak whisky; but no doubt many of his dupes imagined that he sat in a palatial office and received myriads of messages from his ubiquitous corps of spies. He was a poor, diseased, cunning rogue; I found him amusing, but I do not think that his patrons always saw the fun of him.

And last there comes the broad outer circle, whereof the thought makes me sad. On that circle are scattered the men who should be England’s backbone, but they are all suffering by reason of the evil germs wafted from the centre of contagion. Mr. Matthew Arnold often gave me a good deal of advice; I wish I could sometimes have given him a little. I should have told him that all his dainty jeers about middle-class denseness were beside the mark; all the complacent mockery concerning the deceased wife’s sister and the rest, was of no use. If you see a man walking right into a deadly quicksand, you do not content yourself with informing him that a bit of fluff has stuck to his coat. Mr. Arnold should have gone among the lower middle-class a trifle more instead of trusting to his superfine imagination, and then he might have got to know whither our poor, stupid folks are tending. I have just ended an unpleasantly long spell which I passed among various centres where middle-class leisure is spent, and I



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would not care to repeat the experience for any money. Any given town will suit a competent observer, for I found scarcely any vital differences in passing from place to place. It is tragical and disheartening to see scores of fine lads and men, full of excellent faculties and latent goodness—and all under the spell of the dreary Circe of the Turf. I have been for a year, on and off, among a large circle of fellows whom I really liked; and what was their staple talk? Nothing but betting. The paralysis at once of intellect and of the sense of humour which attacks the man who begins flirting with the gambling Enchantress struck me with a sense of helplessness. I like to see a race when it is possible, and I can always keep a kind of picture of a horse in my eye. Well, I have known a very enthusiastic gentleman say, “The Bard, sir, The Bard; the big horse, the mighty bay. He’ll smother ’em all.” I modestly said, “Do you think he is big enough?” “Big enough! a giant, sir! Mark my words, sir, you’ll see Bob Peck’s colours in triumph on the bay.” I mildly said: “I thought The Bard was a very little one when I saw him, and he didn’t seem bay. He was rather like the colour you might get by shaking a flour-dredger over a mulberry. Have you had a look at him?” As usual, I found that my learned friend had never seen that horse nor any other; he was neglecting his business, loafing with wastrels, and trying, in a small way, to imitate the fine strategy of the Colonel and the Captain and Odysseus. Amongst these bewitched unfortunates, the life of the soul seems to die away. Once I said to a nice lad, “Do none of your set ever read anything?” and he made answer, “I don’t think any of them read very much except the *Sportsman*.” That was true—very true and rather shocking. The *Sportsman* is bright enough and good enough in its way, and I read it constantly; but to limit your literature to the *Sportsman* alone—well, it must be cramping. But that is what our fine young men are mostly doing nowadays; the eager, intellectual life of young Scotchmen and of the better sort of Englishmen is unknown: you may wait for a year and you will never hear a word of talk which is essentially above the intelligence of a hog; and a man of whom you are fond, purely because of his kindness, may bore you in the deadliest manner by drawling on by the hour about names and weights, the shifting of the odds, and the changes of luck. The country fairly swarms with clubs where betting goes on all day, and sometimes all night: the despicable dupes are drawn in one after another, and they fall into manifold varieties of mischief; agonized parents pray for help; employers chafe at the carelessness and pre-occupation of their servants; the dupes sink to ruin unpitied, and still the crowd steps onward to the gulf of doom. To think that by merely setting certain noble creatures to exhibit their speed and staunchness, we should have ended by establishing



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in our midst a veritable Inferno! Our faith, our honour, our manhood, our future as a nation, are being sacrificed, and all because Circe has read her spell over our best and most promising souls. And our legislators amuse themselves with recriminations! We foster a horde of bloodsuckers who rear their strength on our weakness and our vices. Why should a drink-seller be kept in check by his having to pay for a license, while the ruin-seller needs no license, and is not even required to pay income tax. If licenses to bet were issued at very heavy prices, and if a crushing fine were inflicted on any man who made a book without holding a license, we might stamp out the villainous small fry who work in corners at all events. But Authority is supreme; the peer and the plutocrat go on unharmed, while the poor men who copy follies which do not hurt the rich go right on to the death of the soul.

*April, 1889.*

### *DISCIPLINE.*

Of the ancestor generally assigned to us by gentlemen who must be right—because they say so—we have very few records save the odd scratches found on bones and stones, and the remnants of extremely frugal meals eaten ages ago. We gather that the revered ancestor hunted large game with an audacity which must have pleased the Rider Haggard of ancient days; at any rate, some simple soul certainly scratched the record of a famous mammoth-fight on a tusk, and we can now see a furious beast charging upon a pigmy who awaits the onset with a coolness quite superior to Mr. Quatermain's heroics. That Siberian hunter evidently went out and tried to make a bag for his own hand, and I have no doubt that he carried out the principle of individualism until his last mammoth reduced him to pulp. There is no indication of organization, and, although the men of the great deltas were able to indulge in oysters with a freedom which almost makes me regret the advance of civilization and the decay of Whitstable, yet I cannot trace one record of an orderly supper-party. This shows how the heathen in his blindness neglects his natural advantages. Long after the savage of the tundras passed away we find vestiges of the family; and thenceforward discipline advances steadily, though with occasional relapses toward anarchy, until we see the ordered perfection which enables us to have West-end riots and all-night sittings of the House of Commons without any trouble whatever. I do not care much to deal with the times when the members of the families elected each other promiscuously according to the success with which they managed to club their neighbours—in fact, I wish to come as soon as possible to the period when discipline, as understood by us, was gradually allowed to sway the lives of men, and when the sections of the race recognized tacitly the law of the strongest by appointing their best man as chief. At present we in England are passing through a dangerous and critical transition stage; a very strong party inclines



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to abolish discipline of all sorts, the views of the Continental anarchists are slowly filtering into our great towns, and, as soon as such a move is safe, we shall have a large number of people who will not scruple to cry out for free land, no taxation, free everything. We have heard so much about rights lately that some of us are beginning to question within ourselves as to what rights really are. If a gentleman, no matter how bookish or eloquent he may be, desires to do away with discipline altogether, I will give him credit for all the tongue-power which he happens to possess; but I must ask leave to think for myself in old-fashioned grooves just a little longer. After all, a system which—for civilized countries—has been growing gradually for more thousands of years than we dare compute cannot be entirely bad, no matter what chance faults we may see. The generations that have flown into the night may not have possessed complete wisdom, but they adapted their social systems step by step to the needs of each new generation, and it requires very little logic to tell that they would not be likely always to cast out the good. The noisy orator who gets up and addresses a London crowd at midnight, yelling “Down with everything!” can hardly know what he means to destroy. We have come a long way since the man of the swamps hunted the hairy elephant and burrowed in caves; that very structure in which the anarchists have taken to meeting represents sixty thousand years of slow progression from savagery towards seemliness and refinement and wisdom; and therefore, bitterly as we may feel the suffering of the poor orator, we say to him, “Wait a little, and talk to us. I do not touch politics—I loathe place-hunters and talkers as much as you do; but you are speaking about reversing the course of the ages, and you cannot quite manage that. Let us forget the windy war of the place-hunters, and speak reasonably and in a broad human way.”

I do not by any means hold with those very robust literary characters who want to see the principle of stern Drill carried into the most minute branchings of our complex society. (By-the-way, these robust gentry always put a capital “D” to the word “Drill,” as though they would have their precious principle enthroned as an object of reverence, or even of worship.) And I am inclined to think that not a few of them must have experienced a severe attack of wrath when they found Carlyle suggesting that King Friedrich Wilhelm would have laid a stick across the shoulders of literary men had he been able to have his own way. The unfeeling old king used to go about thumping people in the streets with a big cudgel; and Carlyle rather implies that the world would not have been much the worse off if a stray literary man here and there could have been bludgeoned. The king flogged apple-women who did not knit and loafers who were unable to find work; and our historian apparently fancies that the dignity of kingship would



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have been rather enhanced than otherwise had his hero broken the head of a poet or essayist. This is a clear case of a disciplinarian suffering from temporary derangement. I really cannot quite stomach such heroic and sweeping work. Carlyle, who was a Scotch peasant by birth, raised himself until he was deservedly regarded as the greatest man of his day, and he did this by means of literature; yet he coolly sets an ignorant, cruel, crowned drill-serjeant high above the men of the literary calling. It is a little too much! Suppose that Carlyle had been flogged back to the plough-tail by some potentate when he first went to the University; should we not have heard a good deal of noise about the business sooner or later? Again, we find Mr. Froude writing somewhat placidly when he tells us about the men who were cut to pieces slowly in order that their agony might be prolonged. The description of the dismemberment of Ballard and the rest, as given in the "Curiosities of Literature," is too gratuitously horrible to be read a second time; but Mr. Froude is convinced that the whole affair was no more than a smart and salutary lesson given to some obtrusive Papists, and he commends the measures adopted by Elizabeth's ministers to secure proper discipline. Similarly the wholesale massacre of the people in the English northern counties is not at all condemned by the judicious Mr. Freeman. The Conqueror left a desert where goodly homesteads and farms had flourished; but we are not any the less to regard him as a great statesman. I grow angry for a time with these bold writers, but I always end by smiling, for there is something very feminine about such shrill expressions of admiration for force. I like to figure to myself the troubles which would have ensued had Carlyle lived under the sway of his precious Friedrich. It was all very well to sit in a comfortable house in pleasant Chelsea, and enlarge upon the beauties of drill and discipline; but, had the sage been cast into one of the noisome old German prisons, and kept there till he was dying, merely because the kingly disciplinarian objected to a phrase in a pamphlet, we should have heard a very curious tune from our great humourist. A man who groaned if his bed was ill-made or his bacon ill-fried would not quite have seen the beauty of being disciplined in a foul cellar among swarming vermin.

The methods of certain other rulers may no doubt appear very fine to our robust scribblers, but I must always enter my own slight protest. Ivan the Terrible was a really thorough-paced martinet who preserved discipline by marvellously powerful methods. He did not mind killing a few thousands of men at a time; and he was answerable for several pyramids of skulls which remained long after his manly spirit had passed away. He occasionally had prisoners flayed alive or impaled merely by way of instituting a change; and I think that some graphic British historian should at once give us a good life of this remarkable and



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royal man. The massacre of the revolted peasants would afford a fine opening to a stern rhetorician; he might lead off thus—"Dost thou think that this king cared for noble sentiment? Thou poor creature who canst not look on a man without turning green with feminine terror, this writer begs to inform you and all creatures of your sort that law is law and discipline is discipline, and the divine origin of both is undeniable even in an age of advertised soap and interminable spouting. Ivan had no parliamentary eloquence under his control, but he had cold steel and whips and racks and wheels, and he employed them all with vigour for the repression of undisciplined scoundrels. He butchered some thousands of innocent men! Ah, my sentimental friend, an anarchic mob cannot be ruled by sprinkling rose-water; the lash and the rope and the stern steel are needed to bring them to order! When my Noble One, with a glare in his lion eyes, watched the rebels being skinned alive, he was performing a truly beneficent function and preparing the way for that vast, noble, and expansive Russia which we see to-day. The poor long-eared mortals who were being skinned did not quite perceive the beneficence at the time. How should they, unhappy long-eared creatures that they were? Oh, Dryasdust, does any long-eared mortal who is being skinned by a true King—a Canning, Koeniglich, Able Man—does the long-eared one amid his wriggles ever recognize the scope and transcendent significance of Kingship? Answer me that, Dryasdust, or shut your eloquent mouth and go home to dinner."

That is quite a proper style for a disciplinarian, but I have not got into the way of using it yet. For, to my limited intelligence, it appears that, if you once begin praising Friedrichs and Charlemagnes and Ivans at the rate of a volume or so per massacre, you may as well go on to Cetewayo and Timour and Attila—not to mention Sulla and Koffee Kalkalli. I abhor the floggers and stranglers and butchers; and when I speak of discipline, I leave them out of count. My business is a little more practical, and I have no time to refute at length the vociferations of persons who tell us that a man proves his capacity of kingship by commanding the extinction or torture of vast numbers of human creatures. My thoughts are not bent on the bad deeds—the deeds of blood—wrought out in bitterness and anguish either long ago or lately; I am thinking of the immense European fabric which looks so solid outwardly, but which is being permeated by the subtle forces of decay and disease. Discipline is being outwardly preserved, but the destroying forces are creeping into every weak place, and the men of our time may see strange things. Gradually a certain resolute body of men are teaching weaker people that even self-discipline is unnecessary, and that self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control are only phrases used by interested people who want to hold others in slavery. In our England it is plainer



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every day that the character of the people is changing. Individual men are obedient, brave to the death, self-sacrificing, just as they always were even in our darkest times; but, none the less, it is too plain that authority ordained by law is dying, and that authority which rests on vague and fluctuating sentiment gains power with steady swiftness. The judges sit and retain all their old confidence; the magistrates sentence daily their batches of submissive culprits; the policeman rules supreme over the streets—he scares the flower-girl, and warns the pensive burglar with the staccato thunder of his monarchical foot. All seems very firm and orderly; and our largest crowds maintain their attitude of harmless good-humour when no inflammatory talkers are there. But the hand has written, and true discipline cannot survive very much longer unless we rouse ourselves for a dead-lift effort. Take Parliament at the crown of the social structure, and the School—the elementary school—at the foundation, and we cannot feel reassured. All between the highest and the lowest is moderately sound; the best of the middle-classes are decent, law-abiding, and steady; the young men are good fellows in a way; the girls and young women are charming and virtuous. But the extremities are rotten, and sentiment has rotted them both. Parliament has become a hissing and a scorn. No man of any party in all broad England could be found to deny this, and many would say more. The sentimentalist has said that loutishness shall not be curbed, that a bawling ruffian who is silenced is martyred, that every man shall talk as he likes, and the veto of the Polish Assembly which enabled any one man to ruin the work of a session is revived in sober, solid England. So it is that all has gone to wreck; and an assembly once the noblest on earth is treated with unhidden contempt by the labourer in his field and the mechanic at his bench. And all this has arisen from lack of discipline.

In the School—the lower-class school—things are much worse. The lowest of the low—the beings who should be kept in order by sharp, firm kindness and justice—have been taught to mock at order and justice and to treat kindness as a sign of weakness. The lads will all soon be ready to aid in governing the country. May the good powers defend us! What a set of governors! The son of the aristocrat is easily held in order, because he knows that any infraction of discipline will be surely punished; the son and daughter of the decent artizan cause little trouble to any teacher, because they know that their parents are on the side of order, and, even if the children are inclined to be rebellious, they dare not defy the united authority of parents and teacher. But the child of the thief, the costermonger, the racecourse swindler, the thriftless labourer, is now practically emancipated through the action of sentimental persons. He may go to school or not, as he likes; and, while the decent and orderly poor are harried by School Board



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regulations, the rough of the slum snaps his fingers without fear at all regulations. If one of the bad boys from the “rookeries” does go to school, he soon learns that he may take his own way. If he is foul-mouthed, thievish, indecent, or insolent, and is promptly punished, he drags his teacher into a police-court, and the sentimentalists secure a conviction. No one can tell the kind of anarchy that reigns in some parts of England excepting men who dwell amidst it; and, to make matters worse, a set of men who may perhaps be charitably reckoned as insane have framed a Parliamentary measure which may render any teacher who controls a young rough liable at once to one hundred pounds fine or six months’ imprisonment. This is no flight of inventive humour on our part; it is plain fact which may probably be seen in action as law before twelve months are over.

Tyranny I abhor, cruelty I abhor—above all, cruelty to children. But we are threatened at one pole of the State-world with a tyranny of factioneers who cultivate rudeness and rowdyism as a science, while at the other pole we are threatened with the uncontrolled tyranny of the “residuum.” We must return to our common sense; the middle-classes must make themselves heard, and we must teach the wild spirits who aim at wrecking all order that safety depends upon the submission of all to the expressed will of the majority. Debate is free enough—too free—and no man is ever neglected ultimately if he has anything rational to say, so that a minority has great power; but, when once a law is made, it must be obeyed. England is mainly sound; our movement is chiefly to the good; but this senseless pampering of loutishness in high and low places is a bad symptom which tends to such consequences as can be understood only by those who have learned to know the secret places. If it is not checked—if anarchists, young and old, are not taught that they must obey or suffer—there is nothing ahead but tumult, heart-burning, and wreck.

*March, 1889.*

### *BAD COMPANY.*

There has been much talk about the insensate youth who boasted that he had squandered half-a-million on the Turf in a year. The marvellous journalists who frequent betting resorts printed hundreds of paragraphs every week explaining the wretched boy’s extravagances—how he lost ten thousand pounds in one evening at cards; how he lost five thousand on one pigeon-shooting match; how he kept fifty racehorses in training; how he made little presents of jewelry to all and sundry of his friends; how he gaily lost fifteen thousand on a single race, though he might have saved himself had he chosen; how he never would wear the same shirt twice. Dear boy! Every day those whose duty compels them to read newspapers were forced to see such nauseous stuff, so that a lad’s private business became public property, and no secret was made of

matters which were a subject for grief and scorn. Hundreds of grown men stood by and saw that boy lose a fortune



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in two hours, and some forty paragraphs might have been collected in which the transaction was described in various terms as a gross swindle. A good shot was killing pigeons—gallant sport—and the wealthy schoolboy was betting. When a sign was given by a bookmaker the shooting-man obeyed, and won or lost according to orders; and every man in the assembly knew what foul work was being carried on. Did one man warn the victim? The next day the whole country knew what had happened, and the names of the thieves were given in almost every sporting print; but the mischief was done, and the lookers-on contented themselves with cheap wrath. A few brief months flew by, and every day saw the usual flock of tributes to the mad boy's vanity; and now the end has come—a colossal fortune, amassed by half a century's toil, has gone into the pockets of all sorts of knaves, and the fatal *Gazette* showed the end. The princely fortune that might have done so much good in the world has gone to fatten the foulest flock of predatory birds that ever cumbered the earth. Where are the glib parasites who came to fawn on the poor dolt? Where are the swarms of begging dandies who clustered around him? Where are the persons who sold him useless horses? Any one who has eyes can see that they point their fingers and shrug. Another victim gone—that is all.

And now our daily moralizers declare that bad company alone brought our unhappy subject down. Yes, bad company! The boy might have grown up into beneficent manhood; he might have helped to spread comfort and culture and solid happiness among the people; but he fell into bad company, and he is now pitied and scorned by the most despicable of the human race; and I observe that one of his humorous Press patrons advises him to drive a cab. Think of Gordon nobly spending his pittance among the poor mudlarks; think of the good Lord Shaftesbury eking out his scanty means among the poor; think of all the gallant souls that made the most of poverty; and then think of that precious half-million gone to light fresh fuel under the hotbeds of vice and villainy! Should I be wrong if I said that the contrast rouses me to indignation and even horror? And now let us consider what bad company means. Paradoxical as it may seem, I do not by any means think that bad company is necessarily made up of bad men. I say that any company is bad for a man if it does not tempt him to exert his higher faculties. It is as certain as death that a bodily member which is left unused shrinks and becomes aborted. If one arm is hung for a long time in a sling, the muscles gradually fade until the skin clings closely round the bone. The wing of the huge penguin still exists, but it is no bigger than that of a wren, and it is hidden away under the skin. The instances might be multiplied a thousandfold. In the same way then any mental faculty becomes atrophied if it is unused. Bad company is that which produces this atrophy of the finer powers; and it is strange



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to see how soon the deadly process of shrinkage sets in. The awful thing to think of is that the cramp may insensibly be set in action by a company which, as I have said, is composed of rather estimable people. Who can forget Lydgate in "Middlemarch"? There is a type drawn by a woman of transcendent genius; and the type represents only too many human wrecks. Lydgate was thrown into a respectable provincial society; he was mastered by high ambition, he possessed great powers, and he felt as though he could move the mocking solidities of the world. Watch the evolution of his long history; to me it is truly awful in spite of its gleams of brightness. The powerful young doctor, equipped in frock-coat and modern hat, plays a part in a tragedy which is as moving as any ever imagined by a brooding, sombre Greek. As you read the book and watch the steady, inexorable decline of the strong man, you feel minded to cry out for some one to save him—he is alive to you, and you want to call out and warn him. When the bitter end comes, you cannot sneer as Lydgate does—you can hardly keep back the tears. And what is it all about? It simply comes to this, that a good strong man falls into the bad company of a number of fairly good but dull people, and the result is a tragedy. Rosamund Vincy is a pattern of propriety; Mrs. Vincy is a fat, kindly soul; Mr. Vincy is a blustering good-natured middle-class man. There is no particular harm among the whole set, yet they contrive to ruin a great man; they lower him from a great career, and convert him into a mere prosperous gout-doctor. Every high aspiration of the man dies away. His wife is essentially a commonplace pretty being, and she cannot understand the great heart and brain that are sacrificed to her; so the genius is forced to break his heart about furniture and carpets and respectability, while the prim pretty young woman who causes the ghastly death of a soul goes on fancying herself a model of good sense and virtue and all the rest. "Of course I should like you to make discoveries," she says; but she only shudders at the microscopic work. When the financial catastrophe comes, she has the great soul at her mercy, and she stabs him—stabs him through and through—while he is too noble and tender to make reply. Ah, it is pitiful! Lydgate is like too many others who are stifling in the mud of respectable dullness. The fate of those men proves what we have asserted, that bad company is that which does not permit the healthful and fruitful development of a soul. Take the case of a brilliant young man who leaves the University and dives into the great whirlpool of London. Perhaps he goes to the Bar, and earns money meantime by writing for the Press. The young fellows who swarm in the London centres—that is, the higher centres—are gentlemen, polished in manner and strict as to the code of honour, save perhaps as regards tradesmen's bills; no coarse word or accent escapes them, and there is something attractive about their merry stoicism.



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But they make bad company for a young and high-souled man, and you may see your young enthusiast, after a year of town-life, converted into a cynic who tries to make game of everything. He talks lightly of women, because that is considered as showing a spirit of superiority; he is humorous regarding the state of his head on the morning after a late supper; he can give you slangy little details about any one and every one whom you may meet at a theatre or any other public place; he is somewhat proud when some bellowing, foul-mouthed bookmaker smiles suavely and inquires, "Doing anything to-day, sir?" Mark you, he is still a charming young fellow; but the bloom has gone from his character. He has been in bad company.

Let it be remembered that bad company may be pleasant at first; and I can easily give the reason for that, although the process of thinking out the problem is a little complicated. The natural tendency of our lower nature is toward idleness; our higher nature drives us to work. But no man ever attained the habit of work without an effort. If once that effort is slackened, then the lower nature gains sway by degrees and idleness creeps in. Idleness is the beginning of almost every form of ill, and the idlest man dashes down the steep to ruin either of body or soul, perhaps of both. Now the best of us—until our habits are formed—find something seductive in the notion of idleness; and it is most marvellous to observe how strongly we are apt to be drawn by a fascinating idle man. By-the-way, no one would accuse the resident Cambridge professors of being slothful, yet one brilliant idle man of genius said, "When I go to Cambridge, I affect them all with a murrain of idleness. I should paralyze the work of the place if I were resident." To return—it appears that the best of men, especially of youthful men, feel the subtle charm of an invitation to laziness. The man who says, "It's a sin to be indoors to-day; let us row up to the backwater and try a smoke among the willows;" or the one who says, "Never mind mathematics to-night; come and have a talk with me," is much more pleasing than the stern moralist. Well, it happens that the most dangerous species of bad company is the species Idler. Look round over the ranks of the hurtful creatures who spoil the State, corrupt and sap the better nature of young men, and disgrace the name of our race. What are they all but idlers pure and simple? Idleness, idleness, the tap-root of misery, sin, villainy! Note the gambler at Monte Carlo, watching with tense but impassive face as the red and the black take the advantage by turns—he is an idler. The roaring bookmaker who contaminates the air with his cries, and who grows wealthy on the spoil of fools—he is an idler. The silly beings who crowd into the betting-shops and lounge till morning in the hot air; the stout florid person who passes from bar to bar in a commercial town; the greasy scoundrel who congregates with his mates



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at street corners; the unspeakable dogs who prowl at night in London and snatch their prey in lonely thoroughfares; the “jolly” gangs of young men who play cards till dawn in provincial club-rooms; even the slouching poacher who passes his afternoons in humorous converse at the ale-house—they are all idlers, and they all form bad company for anybody who comes within range of their influences. We are nearing the point of our demonstration. The youth is at first attracted by the charm of mere laziness, but he does not quite know it. Look at the case of the lad who goes fresh from school to the city, and starts life at seventeen years of age. We will say that he lives in a suburb of some great town. At first he returns home at night full of quite admirable resolves; he intends to improve himself and advance himself in the world. But on one fine evening a companion suggests a stroll, and it happens that billiards are suggested. Away goes the youngster into that flash atmosphere through which sharp, prematurely-aged features loom so curiously; he hears the low hum, he sees the intense eagerness and suspense of the strikers, and he learns to like the place. After a while he is found there nightly; his general style is low, his talk is that of the music-hall—the ineffable flash air has taken the place of his natural repose. He ought to be studying as many languages as possible, he ought to be watching the markets abroad, or he should be reading the latest science if he is engaged in practical work. But no—he is in bad company, and we find him at eight-and-twenty a disappointed, semi-competent man who grumbles very much about the Germans.

If we go to the lower classes, we observe the same set of phenomena. A young workman is chatting with his friends in a public-house on Saturday night; he rises to go at half-past nine, but his comrades pull him down. “Make it eleven o’clock,” they say. He drinks fast in the last hour, and is then so exhilarated that he probably conveys a supply of beer home. On Sunday morning he feels muddled, heavy, a little troubled with nausea; his mates hail him joyously, and then the company wait with anxiety until the public-houses are open; then the dry throats are eased and the low spirits raised, and the game goes on till three. In the afternoon the young workman sleeps, and when he wakes up he is so depressed that he goes out and meets his mates again. Once more he is persuaded to exceed, but he reckons on having a good long sleep. With aching head and fevered hands he makes a wild rush next morning, and arrives at the shop only to find himself shut out. He is horrified and doleful, when up come a few of his friends. They laugh the matter off. “It’s only a quarter lost! There’s time for a pint before we go in.” So the drinking is begun again, and the men have none of the delicacy and steadiness of hand that are needed. Is it not an old story? The loss of “quarters,” half-days, and days goes on; then Saint Monday comes



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to be observed; then the spoiled young man and his merry crew begin to draw very short wages on Saturdays; then the foreman begins to look askance as the blinking uneasy laggard enters; and last comes the fatal quiet speech, "You won't be required on Monday." Bad company! As for the heartbreaking cases of young men who go up to the Universities full of bright hope and equipped at all points splendidly, they are almost too pitiful. Very often the lads who have done so well that subscriptions are raised for them are the ones who go wrong soonest. A smart student wins a scholarship or two, and his parents or relatives make a dead-lift effort to scrape money so that the clever fellow may go well through his course. At the end of a year the youth fails to present any trophies of distinction; he comes home as a loungeur; this is "slow" and the other is "slow," and the old folk are treated with easy contempt. Still there is hope—so very brilliant a young gentleman must succeed in the end. But the brilliant one has taken up with rich young cads who affect bull-terriers and boxing-gloves; he is not averse from a street-brawl in the foggy November days; he can take his part in questionable choruses; he yells on the tow-path or in the pit of the theatre, and he is often shaky in the morning after a dose of very bad wine. All the idleness and rowdyism do not matter to Brown and Tomkins and the rest of the raffish company, for they only read for the pass degree or take the poll; but the fortunes—almost the lives—of many folk depend on our young hopeful's securing his Class, and yet he fritters away time among bad talk, bad habits, bad drink, and bad tobacco. Then come rumours of bills, then the crash, and the brilliant youth goes down, while Brown and Tomkins and all the rowdies say, "What a fool he was to try going our pace!" Bad company!

I should therefore say to any youth—"Always be doing something—bad company never do anything; and thus, if you are resolved to be always doing something useful, it follows that you will not be among the bad company." This seems to me to be conclusive; and many a broken heart and broken life might have been kept sound if inexperienced youths were only taught thus much continually.

*October, 1888.*

*GOOD COMPANY.*

Let it be understood that I do not intend to speak very much about the excellent people who are kind enough to label themselves as "Society," for I have had quite enough experience of them at one time and another, and my impressions are not of a peculiarly reverential kind. "Company" among the set who regard themselves as the cream of England's—and consequently of the world's—population is something so laborious, so useless, so exhausting that I cannot imagine any really rational person attending a "function" (that is the proper name) if Providence had left open the remotest chance of running away; at any rate, the rational person would not endure more than one experience.



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For, when the clear-seeing outsider looks into "Society," and studies the members who make up the little clique, he is smitten with thoughts that lie too deep for tears—or laughter. A perfectly fresh mind, when brought to bear on the "Society" phenomenon, asks, "What are these people? What have they done? What are they particularly fitted for? Is there anything noble about them? Is their conversation at all charming? Are any of them really happy?" And to all of these queries the most disappointing answers must be returned. Take the men. Here is a marquis who is a Knight of the Garter. He has held offices in several Cabinets; he can control the votes spread over a very large slice of a county, and his income amounts to some trifle like one hundred and eighty thousand pounds per year. We may surely expect something of the superb aristocratic grace here, and surely a chance word of wit may drop from a man who has been in the most influential of European assemblies! Alas! The potentate crosses his hand over his comfortable stomach, and his contributions to the entertainment of the evening amount to occasional ejaculations of "Ugh! Ugh!" "Hah!" "Hey!" "Exactly!" "Ugh! Ugh!" In the higher spheres of intellect and breeding I have no doubt but that "Ugh! Ugh!" "Hah!" "Hey!" may have some profound significance; but, to say the least, it is not obviously weighty. The marchioness is sweet in manner, grave, reposeful, and with a flash of wit at disposal—not too obvious wit—that would offend against the canon which ordains restraint; but she might, one thinks, become tiresome in an hour. No one could say that her manners were anything but absolutely simple, yet the very simplicity is so obviously maintained as a sort of gymnastic effort that it tires us only to study it. Then here is a viscount, graceful, well-set, easy in his pose, talking with a deep voice, and lisping to the faintest degree. He has owned some horses, caused some scandals, waltzed some waltzes, and eaten a very large number of good dinners: he has been admired by many, hated by many, threatened by many, and he would not be admitted to any refined middle-class home; yet here he is in his element, and no one would think of questioning his presence. He never uttered a really wise or helpful word in his life, he never did anything save pamper himself—his precious self—and yet he is in "Society," and reckoned as rather an authority too! These are only types, but, if you run through them all, you must discover that only the sweet and splendid girls who have not had time to be spoilt and soured are worth thinking about. If there is dancing, it is of course carried out with perfect grace and composure; if there is merely an assembly, every one looks as well as possible, and every one stares at every one else with an air as indifferent as possible. But the child of nature asks in wild bewilderment, "Where on earth does the human companionship come in?" Young girls are nowadays beginning to expect bright



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talk from their partners, and the ladies have a singularly pretty way of saying the most biting things in a smooth and unconcerned fashion when they find a dunce beginning to talk platitudes or to patronize his partner; but the middle generation are unspeakably inane; and the worst is that they regard their inanity as a decided sign of distinction. A grave man who adds a sense of humour to his gravity may find a sort of melancholy entertainment if he listens to a pair of thorough-paced "Society" gentry. He will learn that you do not go to a "function" to please others or to be pleased yourself; you must not be witty—that is bad form; you must not be quietly in earnest—that is left to literary people; you must not speak plain, direct truth even in the most restrained fashion—that is to render yourself liable to be classified as a savage. No. You go to a "function" in order, firstly, to see who else is there; secondly, to let others see you; thirdly, to be able to say to absentees that you saw they were not there; fourthly, to say, with a liquid roll on the "ll," "She's looking remarkably wellll." These are the great and glorious duties of the Society person. A little funny creature was once talking to a writer of some distinction. The little funny man would have been like a footman if he had been eight inches taller, for his manners savoured of the pantry. As it was, he succeeded in resembling a somewhat diminutive valet who had learnt his style and accent from a cook. The writer, out of common politeness, spoke of some ordinary topic, and the valet observed with honest pride, "We don't talk about that sort of thing." The writer smiled grimly from under his jutting brows, and he repeated that valet's terrific repartee for many days. The actual talk which goes on runs in this way, "Quite charming weather!" "Yes, very." "I didn't see you at Lady Blank's on Tuesday?" "No; we could hardly arrange to suit times at all." "She was looking uncommonly well. The new North-Country girl has come out." "So I've heard." "Going to Goodwood?" "Yes. We take Brighton this time with the Sendalls." And so on. It dribbles for the regulation time, and, after a sufficient period of mortal endurance, the crowd disperse, and proceed to scandalize each other or to carry news elsewhere about the ladies who were looking "remarkably well-l-l."

As for the dreadful crushes, what can one say? The absurd rooms where six hundred people try to move about in a space meant for three hundred; the staircase a Black-Hole tempered by flowers; the tired smile of the hostess; the set simper of long-necked shaven young men; the patient, tortured hypocrisy of hustled and heated ladies; the babble of scrappy nothings; the envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness; the magnificence turned into meanness; the lack of all feeling of home, and the discontented dispersal of ungrateful people—are these the things to occupy life? Are these the things to interest any manly man who is free to act for himself? Hardly.



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But our “company” refers to the meeting of human souls and hearts, and not to the meeting of a fortuitous concourse of male and female evening-dresses. I have now before me a very brilliant published account of a reception at George Eliot’s house. Those assemblies were company, and company of the finest kind. The exaggerated fuss made by the sibyl’s husband in order to secure silence while she was speaking sometimes became a little embarrassing when men of a humorous turn were there; but nevertheless the best in England met in that drawing-room, and all that was highest in literature, science, and art was talked over in graceful fashion. The sniffing drawl of Society and the impudent affectation of cynicism were not to be found; and grave men and women—some of them mournful enough, it may be—agreed to make the useful hours fleet to some profit. No man or woman in England—or in Europe for that matter—was unwilling to enter that modest but brilliant assemblage, and I wish some one could have taken minute notes, though that of course would have been too entirely shocking. When I think of that little deep-voiced lady gathering the choicest spirits of her day together, and keeping so many notes in tuneful chime, I hardly know whether to use superlatives of admiration about her or superlatives of contempt about the fribbles who crush each other on staircases and babble like parrots in an aviary. If we cast back a little, we have another example of an almost perfect company. People have talked of Johnson, Burke, Boswell, Beauclerc, and Goldsmith until the subject is growing a thought stale; but, unless a reader takes Boswell and reads the book attentively after he has come to maturity, he can hardly imagine how fine was that admirable company. They were men of high aims and strong sense; they talked at their very best, and they talked because they wished to attain clear views of life and fate. The old gladiator sometimes argued for victory, but that was only in moments of whim, and he was always ready to acknowledge when he was in error. Those men may sometimes have drunk too much wine; they may have spoken platitudes on occasion; but they were good company for each other, and the hearty, manly friendship which all but poor Goldsmith and Boswell felt for every one else was certainly excellent. Assemblies like the Club are impossible nowadays; but surely we might find some modification suited even to our gigantic intellects and our exaggerated cleverness! I have defined bad company; I may define good company as that social intercourse which tends to bring out all that is best in man. I have said my bitter word about the artificial society of the capital; but I never forget the lovely quiet circles which meet in places far away from the blare of the city. In especial I may refer to the beautiful family assemblies which are almost self-centred. The girls are all at home, but the boys are scattered. Harry writes from India, with all sorts of gossip from Simla,



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and many longings for home; a neighbour calls, and the Indian letter gives matter for pleasant half-melancholy chat. Then the quiet evening passes with books and placid casual talk; the nerves from the family stretch perhaps all over the world, but all the threads converge on one centre. This life is led in many places, and the folk who so live are good company among themselves, and good company for all who meet them.

The very thought of the men who are usually described in set slang phrases is enough to arouse a shudder. The loud wit who cracks his prepared witticisms either at the head of a tavern-table or in private society is a mere horror. The tavern men of the commercial traveller class are very bad, for their mirth is prepared; their jokes have run the length and breadth of the United Kingdom, and they are not always prepared to sacrifice the privilege of being coarse which used to be regarded as the joker's prerogative. In moving about the world I have always found that the society of the great commercial room set up for being jolly, but I could never exactly perceive where the jollity entered. Noise, sham gentility, the cackle of false laughter were there; but the strong, sincere cheerfulness of friendly men—never! Yet the tavern humourist, or even the club joker, is as nothing compared with the true professional wit. Who can remember that story about Theodore Hook and the orange? Hook wrote a note to the hostess, saying, "Ask me at dinner if I will venture on an orange." The lady did so, and then the brilliant wit promptly made answer, "I'm afraid I should tumble off." A whole volume of biography is implied in that one gruesome and vulgar anecdote. In truth, the professional wit is no company at all; he has the effect of a performing monkey suddenly planted on the table, and his efforts are usually quite on a level with the monkey's.

Among the higher Bohemian sets—Bohemian they call themselves, as if there ever was a Bohemian with five hundred a year!—good company is common. I may say, with fear and much trembling, that the man of letters, the man who can name you all the Restoration comedies or tell you the styles of the contemporaries of Alan Chartier is a most terrible being, and I should risk sharks rather than remain with him on a desolate island; but a mixed set of artists, musicians, verse-makers, novelists, critics—yea, even critics—contrive usually to make an unusually pleasant company. They are all so clever that the professional wit dares not raise his voice lest some wielder of the bludgeon should smite him; no long-winded talk is allowed, and, though a bore may once be admitted to the company, he certainly will never be admitted more than once. The talk ranges loosely from point to point, and yet a certain sequence is always observed; the men are freed from conventions; they like each other and know each other's measure pretty well; so the hours fly in merry fashion, and the brethren who carried on the symposium go away



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well pleased with themselves and with each other. There can be no good company where the capacity for general agreement is carried too far in any quarter. Unity of aim, difference of opinion—those are the elements that make men's conversations valuable. Last of all, I must declare that there can be no good company unless women are present. The artists and authors and the rest are all very well in their way, but the dexterous unseen touch of the lady is needed; and no man can reckon himself fit to converse at all unless he has been taught by women's care, and gently reprov'd by women's impalpable skill. Young men of our day are beginning to think it childish or tedious to mix much in women's society; the consequence is that, though many of them go a long way toward being gentlemen, too many are the merest cubs that ever exhibited pure loutishness in conversation. The subtle blending, the light give-and-take of chat between men and women is the true training which makes men graceful of tongue, kindly in the use of phrases, and, I believe, pure in heart.

*October, 1888.*

### *GOING A-WALKING.*

One of the most pestilent of all social nuisances is the athlete who must be eternally performing "feats," and then talking about them. He goes to the Alps, and, instead of looking at the riot of sunset colour or the immortal calm of the slumbering peaks, he attempts performances which might be amusing in a circus of unlimited size, but which are not in the least interesting when brought off on the mighty declivities of the great hills. One of these gentlemen takes up a quarter of a volume in telling us how he first of all climbed up a terrible peak, then fell backwards and slid down a slope of eight hundred feet, cutting his head to the bone, and losing enough blood to make him feel faint. The same gentleman had seen two of his companions fly into eternity down the grim sides of the same mountain; but he must needs climb to the top, not in order to serve any scientific purpose, or even to secure a striking view, but merely to say he had been there. After an hour on the summit of the enormous mass of stone, he came down; and I should have liked to ask him what he reckoned to be the net profit accruing to him for his little exploit. Wise men do not want to clamber up immense and dangerous Alps; there is a kind of heroic lunacy about the business, but it is not useful, and it certainly is not inviting. If a thoughtful man goes even in winter among the mountains, their vast repose sinks on his soul; his love of them never slackens, and he returns again and again to his haunts until time has stiffened his joints and dulled his eyes, and he prepares to go down into the dust of death. But the wise man has a salutary dislike of break-neck situations; he cannot let his sweet or melancholy fancies free while he is hanging on for dear life to some inhospitable crag, so he prefers a little moderate exercise of the muscles,



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and a good deal of placid gazing on scenes that ennoble his thoughts and make his imagination more lofty. One of the mountain-climbing enthusiasts could not contrive to break his neck in Europe, so, with a gallantry worthy of a better cause, he went to South America and scaled Chimborazo. He could not quite break his neck even in the Andes, but he no doubt turned many athletic friends yellow with envy. Yet another went to the Caucasus, and found so many charming and almost deadly perils there that he wants numbers of people to go out and share his raptures.

The same barren competitive spirit breaks out in other directions. Men will run across the North Sea in a five-ton boat, though there are scores of big and comfortable steamers to carry them: they are cramped in their tiny craft; they can get no exercise; their limbs are pained; they undergo a few days of cruel privation—and all in order that they may tell how they bore a drenching in a cockboat. On the roads in our own England we see the same disposition made manifest. The bicyclist tears along with his head low and his eyes fixed just ahead of the tyre of his front wheel; he does not enjoy the lovely panorama that flits past him, he has no definite thought, he only wants to cover so many miles before dark; save for the fresh air that will whistle past him, thrilling his blood, he might as well be rolling round on a cinder track in some running-ground. But the walker—the long-distance walker—is the most trying of all to the average leisurely and meditative citizen. He fits himself out with elaborate boots and ribbed stockings; he carries resin and other medicaments for use in case his feet should give way; his knapsack is unspeakably stylish, and he posts off like a spirited thoroughbred running a trial. His one thought is of distances; he gloats over a milestone which informs him that he is going well up to five and a half miles per hour, and he fills up his evening by giving spirited but somewhat trying accounts of the pace at which he did each stage of his pilgrimage. In the early morning he is astir, not because he likes to see the diamond dew on the lovely trees or hear the chant of the birds as they sing of love and thanksgiving—he wants to make a good start, so that he may devour even more of the way than he did the day before. In any one lane that he passes through there are scores of sights that offer a harvest to the quiet eye; but our insatiable athlete does not want to see anything in particular until the sight of his evening steak fills him with rapture. If the most patient and urbane of men were shut up with one of these tremendous fellows during a storm of rain, he would pray for deliverance before a couple of hours went by; for the competitive athlete's intelligence seems to settle in his calves, and he refers to his legs for all topics which he kindly conceives to possess human interest. Of course the swift walker may become a useful citizen should we ever have war; he will display the same qualities that were shown by the sturdy Bavarians and Brandenburgers who bore those terrible marches in 1870 and swept MacMahon into a deadly trap by sheer endurance and speed of foot; but he is not the ideal companion.



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Persons who are wise proceed on a different plan; they wish to make the most of every moment, and, while they value exercise, they like to make the quickened currents of their blood feed a receptive and perhaps somewhat epicurean brain. To the judicious man our lovely country affords a veritable harvest of delights—and the delights can be gained with very little trouble. I let the swift muscular men hurry away to the Tyrol or the Caucasus or the Rocky Mountains, or whithersoever else they care to go, and I turn to our own windy seashore or quiet lanes or flushed purple moorlands. I do not much care for the babble of talk at my elbow; but one good companion who has cultivated the art of keeping silent is a boon. Suppose that you follow me on a roundabout journey. Say we run northward in the train and resolve to work to the south on foot; we start by the sea, and foot it on some fine gaudy morning over the springy links where the grass grows gaily and the steel-coloured bent-grass gleams like the bayonets of some vast host. The fresh wind sings from the sea and flies through the lungs and into the pores with an exhilarating effect like that of wine; the waves dance shoreward, glittering as if diamonds were being pelted down from the blue arch above; the sea-swallows sweep over the bubbling crests like flights of silver arrows. It is very joyous. You have set off early, of course, and the rabbits have not yet turned into their holes for their day-long snooze. Watch quietly, and you may perhaps see how they make their fairy rings on the grass. One frolicsome brown rogue whisks up his white tail, and begins careering round and round; another is fired by emulation and joins; another and another follow, and soon there is a flying ring of merry little creatures who seem quite demented with the very pleasure of living. One bounds into the air with a comic curvet, and comes down with a thud; the others copy him, and there is a wild maze of coiling bodies and gleaming white tails. But let the treacherous wind carry the scent of you down on the little rascals and you will see a change. An old fellow sits up like a kangaroo for an instant, looking extremely wise and vigilant; he drops and kicks the ground with a sharp thud that can be heard a long way off; the terror of man asserts itself in the midst of that pure, peaceful beauty, and the whole flock dart off in agitated fashion till they reach their holes; then they seem to look round with a sarcastic air, for they know that you could not even raise a gun to your shoulder in time to catch one of them before he made his lightning dive into the darksome depths of the sand-hill. How strange it is that meditative men like to watch the ways of wild things! White of Selborne did not care much for killing anything in particular; he enjoyed himself in a beautiful way for years, merely because he had learned to love the pretty creatures of fen and meadow and woodland. Mr. Russell Lowell can spend a happy day in watching through his glass the habits of the birds that haunt his great garden; he does not want a gun; he only cares to observe the instincts which God has implanted in the harmless children of the air. On our walking tour we have hundreds of chances to see the mystic mode of life pursued by the creatures that swarm even in our crowded England; and if we use our eyes we may see a score of genuine miracles every day.



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On the pleasant “links” there is always something new to draw the eye. Out on the flashing sea a ship rolls bravely away to north or south; her sails are snowy in certain lights, and then in an instant she stands up in raiment of sooty black. You may make up a story about her if you are fanciful. Perhaps she is trailing her way into the deep quiet harbour which you have just left, and the women are waiting until the rough bearded fellows come lumbering up the quay. Perhaps she was careering over the rushing mountain waves to the southward of the desolate Horn only a few weeks ago, and the men were counting the days wearily, while the lasses and wives at home sighed as the wind scourged the sea in the dreary night and set all the rocks thundering with the charges of mad surges. A little indulgence of the fancy does you no harm even though you may be all wrong; very likely the skipper of the glad-looking vessel is tipsy, maybe he has just been rope’s-ending his cabin-boy or engaging in some equally unpoetic pursuit; still no one is harmed by idealizing a little, and so, by your leave, we will not alter our crude romance of the sailor-men. Meantime, as you go on framing poetic fancies, there is a school of other poets up above you, and they are composing their fantasies at a pretty rate. The modest brown lark sits quietly amid the sheltering grass, and will hardly stir, no matter how near her you may go; but her mate, the glorious singer, is far away up toward the sun, and he shouts in his joyous ecstasy until the heaven is full of his exquisite joyance. Imagine how he puts his heart into his carol! He is at least a mile above you, and you can hear him over a radius of half a mile, measured from the place where he will drop. The little poets chant one against the other, and yet there is no discord, for the magic of distance seems to harmonize song with song, and the tumult soothes instead of exciting you. Who is the poet who talks of “drawing a thread of honey through your heart”? It is a quaint, conceited phrase, and yet somehow it gives with absurd felicity some idea of the lark’s song. They massacre these innocents of the holy choir by thousands, and put them in puddings for Cockneys to eat. The mere memory of one of those beatified mornings makes you want to take the blood of the first poulterer whom you find exposing a piteous string of the exquisite darlings. But we must not think of blood, or taxes, or German bands, or political speeches, or any other abomination, for our walk takes us through flowery regions of peace.

Your muscles tighten rarely as you stump on over the elastic herbage; two miles an hour is quite enough for your modest desires, especially as you know you can quicken to four or five whenever you choose. As the day wears on, the glorious open-air confusion takes possession of your senses, your pulses beat with spirit, and you pass amid floating visions of keen colour, soft greenery, comforting shades.



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The corn rustles on the margin where the sandy soil ceases; the sleepy farmhouses seem to 'give you a lazy greeting, and the figures of the labourers are like natural features of the landscape. Everything appears friendly; it may be that the feeling of kindness and security arises from your physical well-being, but it is there all the same, and what can you do more than enjoy? Perhaps in the midst of your confused happiness your mind begins acting on its own account, and quite disregards its humble companion, the body. Xavier de Maistre's mind always did so, and left what Xavier called the poor *bete* of a carcass to take care of itself; and all of us have to experience this double existence at times. Then you find the advantages of knowing a great deal of poetry. I would not give a rush for a man who merely pores over his poets in order to make notes or comments on them; you ought to have them as beloved companions to be near you night and day, to take up the parable when your own independent thought is hazy with delight or even with sorrow. As you tramp along the whistling stretches amid the blaze of the ragworts and the tender passing glances of the wild veronica, you can take in all their loveliness with the eye, while the brain goes on adding to your pleasure by recalling the music of the poets. Perhaps you fall into step with the quiver and beat of our British Homer's rushing rhymes, and Marmion thunders over the brown hills of the Border, or Clara lingers where mingles war's rattle with groans of the dying. Perhaps the wilful brain persists in crooning over the "Belle Dame Sans Merci;" your mood flutters and changes with every minute, and you derive equal satisfaction from the organ-roll of Milton or the silvery flageolet tones of Thomas Moore. If culture consists in learning the grammar and etymologies of a poet's song, then no cultured man will ever get any pleasure from poetry while he is on a walking tour; but, if you absorb your poets into your being, you have spells of rare and unexpected delight.

The halt is always pleasant. On our sand-hills the brackens grow to an immense height, and, if you lie down among them, you are surrounded by a pale green gleam, as if you had dived beneath some lucent sun-smitten water. The ground-lark sways on a frond above you; the stonechat lights for an instant, utters his cracking cry, and is off with a whisk; you have fair, quiet, and sweet rest, and you start up ready to jog along again. You come to a slow clear stream that winds seaward, lilted to itself in low whispered cadences. Over some broad shallow pool paven with brown stones the little trout fly hither and thither, making a weft and woof of dark streaks as they travel; the minnows poise themselves, and shiver and dart convulsively; the leisurely eel undulates along, and perhaps gives you a glint of his wicked eye; you begin to understand the angler's fascination, for the most restive of men might be lulled by the light moan of that wimpling current. Cruel? Alas, yes!



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That quaint old cruel coxcomb in his gullet  
Should have a hook, with a small trout to pull it.

That was the little punishment which Byron devised for Izaak Walton. But of course, if you once begin to be supersensitive about cruelty, you find your way blocked at every cross-road of life, and existence ceases to be worth having.

On, as the sun slopes, and his beams fall slant over solemn mounds of cool gray hue and woody fields all pranked in gold. Look to the north, and you see the far-away hills in their sunset livery of white and purple and rose. On the clear summits the snow sometimes lies; and, as the royal orb sinks, you will see the snow blush for a minute with throbbing carnation tints that shift and faint off slowly into cold pallid green. The heart is too full of ecstasy to allow even of thought. You live—that is all! You may continue your wanderings among all the mystic sounds and sights of the night, but it is better to rest long and well when you can. Let the village innkeeper put down for you the coarsest fare that can be conceived, and you will be content; for, as a matter of fact, any food and drink appeal gratefully to the palate of a man who has been inhaling the raciest air at every pore for eight or ten hours. If the fare does not happen to be coarse—if, for example, the landlord has a dish of trout—so much the better; you do not envy any crowned personage in Christendom or elsewhere. And how much does your day of Paradise cost you? At the utmost, half-a-crown. Had you been away on the Rhine or in Switzerland or in some German home of brigands, you would have been bleeding at the purse all day, while in our own matchless land you have had merriment, wild nature, air that is like the essence of life—and all for thirty pence. When night falls heavily, you pass your last hour in listening to the under-song of the sea and the whisper of the roaming winds among the grass. Then, if you are wise and grateful, you thank the Giver of all, and go to sleep.

In the jolly greenwoods of the Midlands you may have enjoyment of another kind. Some men prefer the sleepy settled villages, the sweeping fens with their bickering windmills, the hush and placidity of old market-towns that brood under the looming majesty of the castle. The truth is that you cannot go anywhere in England outside of the blighted hideous manufacturing districts without finding beauty and peace. In the first instance you seek health and physical well-being—that goes without saying; but the walking epicure must also have dainty thoughts, full banquets of the mind, quiet hours wherein resolutions may be framed in solitude and left in the soul to ripen. When the epicure returns to the din of towns, he has a safeguard in his own breast which tends to keep him alike from folly and melancholy. Furthermore, as he passes the reeking dens where human beings crowd who never see flower or tree, he feels all churlishness depart



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from him, and he is ready to pity and help his less happy brethren. After he has settled to labour again, his hours of rest are made calmly contented by the chance visions that come to him and show him the blown sea, the rustling whiteness of fretted surges, the painted meadows, and the solemn colours of the dying day. And all this talk we have got only through letting our minds go wandering away on the subject of going a-walking. I have always said that the sweetest pleasures are almost costless. The placid "look of the bay mare" took all the silliness out of Walt Whitman; and there is more in his queer phrase than meets the eye. One word. When you go a-walking, do not try to be obtrusively merry. Meet a group of tramping gentlemen who have been beer-drinking at noon; they are surprisingly vivacious until the gaze of the sun becomes importunate; they even sing as they go, and their hearty laughter resounds far and near. See them in the afternoon, and ask where the merriment is; their eyes are glazed, their nerves crave slumber, their steps are by no mean sprightly, and they probably form a doleful company, ready to quarrel or think pessimistic thoughts. Be calm, placid, even; do not expect too much, and your reward will be rich.

*June, 1888.*

*"SPORT."*

Simple folk fancy that "sport" must be a joyous pursuit, and that a sportsman is a jovial, light-hearted, and rather innocent person. It may be useful to many parents, and perhaps to some young people, if I let them know what "sport" really means nowadays. Those who have their imaginations filled with pictures of merry red-coated riders, or of sturdy gaitered squires tramping through stubble behind their dogs, are quite welcome to their agreeable visions. The hounds of course meet in hundreds of places in winter-time, and the bold riders charge gaily across meadows and over fences. It is a splendid, exhilarating sight; and no one can find much fault with the pursuit, for it gives health to thousands. The foxes may perhaps object a little; but, if a philosopher could explain to them that, if they were not preserved for hunting purposes, they would soon be exterminated, we have no doubt that they would choose the alternative which gives them a chance. Shooting is engaged in with more enthusiasm now than ever it was before; and doubtless the gentlemen who sit in snug corners and knock down tame pheasants derive benefit—physical and moral—from the lively exercise. But the word "sport" in England does not now refer to hunting and shooting; it has a wide application, and it describes in a generic way a number of pursuits which are, to say the least, not improving to those who engage in them.



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The royal sport is of course horse-racing; and about that amusement—in its present aspect—I may have something profitable to say. The advocates of racing inform us that the noble sport improves the breed of horses, and affords wholesome relaxation to men; they grow quite indignant with the narrow Puritans who talk “stuff” about demoralization, and they have numerous fine phrases referring to old England and the spirit of our fathers. All the talk concerning the improving influence of the Turf on horses and men is pernicious nonsense, and there is an end of the matter. The English thoroughbred is a beautiful creature, and it is pleasant enough to see him make his splendid rush from start to finish; amusing also is it to watch the skill of the wiry manikins who ride; the jockeys measure every second and every yard, and their cleverness in extracting the last ounce of strength from their horses is quite curious. The merest novice may enjoy the sight of the gay colours, and he cannot help feeling a thrill of excitement when the thud, thud of the hoofs sounds near him as the exquisite slender animals fly past. But the persons who take most interest in races are those who hardly know a horse from a mule. They may make a chance visit to a racecourse, but the speed and beauty of the animals do not interest them in any way; they cannot judge the skill of a rider; they have no eye for anything but money. To them a horse is merely a name; and, so far from their racing pursuits bringing them health, they prefer staying in a low club or lower public-house, where they may gamble without being obliged to trouble themselves about the nobler animals on which they bet.

The crowd on a racecourse is always a hideous spectacle. The class of men who swarm there are amongst the worst specimens of the human race, and, when a stranger has wandered among them for an hour or so, he feels as though he had been gazing at one huge, gross, distorted face. Their language is many degrees below vulgarity; in fact, their coarseness can be understood only by people who have been forced to go much amongst them—and that perhaps is fortunate. The quiet stoical aristocrats in the special enclosures are in all ways inoffensive; they gamble and gossip, but their betting is carried on with still self-restraint, and their gossip is the ordinary polished triviality of the country-house and drawing-room. But what can be said of the beings who crowd the betting-ring? They are indeed awful types of humanity, fitted to make sensitive men shudder. Their yells, their profanity, their low cunning, their noisy eagerness to pounce upon a simpleton, their infamous obscenity, all combine to make them the most loathsome collection of human beings to be found on the face of the broad earth.



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Observe that all of this betting crew appear to be what is called rolling in money. They never do a stroke of useful work; they merely howl and make bets—that is their contribution to the prosperity of the State. Yet they are dressed with vulgar richness, they fare sumptuously, and they would not condescend to taste any wine save the finest vintages; they have servants and good horses, and in all ways they resemble some rank luxurious growth that has sprung from a putrid soil. Mark that these bookmakers, as they are called, are not gentlemen in any sense of the word; some of them are publicans, some look like prize-fighters, some like promoted costermongers, some like common thieves. There is not a man in the company who speaks with a decently refined accent—in short, to use plain terms, they are the scum of the earth. Whence then comes the money which enables them to live in riotous profusion? The explanation is a sad one, and I trust that these words may warn many young people in time. Here is the point to be weighed upon—these foul-mouthed persons in the betting-ring are able to travel about all spring, summer, and autumn, staying in the best hotels and lacking nothing; in winter they can loll away their time in billiard-rooms. Once more, who supplies the means? It is the senseless outside public who imagine they know something about “sport.”

Every town in England contains some centre—generally a public-house or a barber’s shop—where men meet to make wagers; the evil influence of the Turf is almost everywhere apparent, for it is probable that at least two millions of men are interested in betting. London swarms with vile clubs which are merely gambling saloons; professional men, tradesmen, clerks, and even artizans crowd into these horrid holes, and do business with the professional gamblers. In London alone there are some half-dozen papers published daily which are entirely devoted to “sport,” and these journals are of course bought by the gudgeons who seek destruction in the betting-rooms. In the provinces there are several towns which easily support a daily sporting journal; and no ordinary paper in the North of England could possibly survive unless at least one-eighth of its space were devoted to racing matters of various sorts. There are hundreds of thousands of our population who read absolutely nothing save lists of weights and entries, quotations which give the odds against horses, and reports of races. Not 5 per cent, of these individuals ever see a horse from year’s end to year’s end, yet they talk of nothing else but horses, horses, horses, and every effort of their intellects is devoted to the task of picking out winners. Incredible as it may seem, these poor souls call themselves sportsmen, and they undoubtedly think that their grubbing about in malodorous tap-rooms is a form of “sport”; it is their hopeless folly and greed that fill the pockets of the loud-mouthed tenants of the Ring. Some one must supply the bookmakers’ wealth,



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and the “some one” is the senseless amateur who takes his ideas from newspapers. The amateur of the tap-room or the club looks down a list of horses and chooses one which he fancies; perhaps he has received private advice from one of the beings who haunt the training-grounds and watch the thoroughbreds at exercise; perhaps he is influenced by some enthusiast who bids him risk all he has on certain private information. The fly enters the den and asks the spider, “What price Flora?”—that means, “What odds are you prepared to lay against the mare named Flora?” The spider answers—say seven to one; the fly hands one pound to the spider, and the bet is made. The peculiarity of this transaction is that one of the parties to it is always careful to arrange so that he cannot lose. Supposing that there are seven horses entered in a race, it is certain that six must be losers. The bookmaker so makes his wagers that no matter which of the seven wins he at least loses nothing; the miserable amateur has only one chance. He may possibly be lucky; but the chances in the long run are dead against him, for he is quite at the mercy of the sharp capitalist who bets with him. The money which the rowdies of the Ring spend so lavishly all comes from the pockets of dupes who persist in pursuing a kind of *ignis fatuus* which too often leads them into a bog of ruin.

This deplorable business of wagering has become universal. We talk of the Italians as a gambling nation, but they are not to be compared with the English for recklessness and purblind persistence. I know almost every town in England, and I say without fear that the main topic of conversation in every place of entertainment where the traveller stays is betting. A tourist must of course make for hotel after hotel where the natives of each place congregate; and, if he keeps his ears open, he will find the gambling venom has tainted the life-blood of the people in every town from Berwick to Hastings. It may be asked, “How do these silly creatures who bet manage to obtain any idea of a horse?” They have not the faintest notion of what any given horse is like, but they usually follow the advice of some sharper who pretends to know what is going to win. There are some hundreds of persons who carry on a kind of secret trade in information, and these persons profess their ability to enable any one to win a fortune. The dupes write for advice, enclosing a fee, and they receive the name of a horse; then they risk their money, and so the shocking game goes on.

I receive only too many letters from wives, mothers, and sisters whose loved ones are being drawn into the vortex of destruction. Let me give some rough colloquial advice to the gamblers—“You bet on horses according to the advice of men who watch them. Observe how foolish you are! The horse A is trained in Yorkshire; the horse B at Newmarket. The man who watches A thinks that the animal can gallop very fast, and you risk your money according to his



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report. But what means has he of knowing the speed of B? If two horses gallop towards the winning-post locked together, it often happens that one wins by about six inches. There is no real difference in their speed, but the winner happens to have a neck slightly longer than the other. Observe that one race-horse—Buccaneer—has been known to cover a mile at the rate of fifty-four feet per second; it is therefore pretty certain that at his very highest speed he could move at sixty feet per second. Very good; it happens then that a horse which wins a race by one foot is about one-sixtieth of a second faster, than the beaten animal. What a dolt you must be to imagine that any man in the world could possibly tell you which of those two brutes was likely to be the winner! It is the merest guess-work; you have all the chances against you and you might as well bet on the tossing of halfpence. The bookmaker does not need to care, for he is safe whatever may win; but you are defying all the laws of chance; and, although you may make one lucky hit, you must fare ill in the end.” But no commonsensical talk seems to have any effect on the insensate fellows who are the betting-man’s prey, and thus this precious sport has become a source of idleness, theft, and vast misery. One wretch goes under, but the stock of human folly is unlimited, and the shoal of gudgeons moves steadily into the bookmaker’s net. One betting-agent in France receives some five thousand letters and telegrams per day, and all this huge correspondence comes from persons who never take the trouble to see a race, but who are bitten with the gambler’s fever. No warning suffices—man after man goes headlong to ruin, and still the doomed host musters in club and tavern. They lose all semblance of gentle humanity; they become mere blockheads—for cupidity and stupidity are usually allied—and they form a demoralizing leaven that is permeating the nation and sapping our manhood.

We have only to consider the position of the various dwarfs who bestride the racehorses in order to see how hard a hold this iniquity has on us. A jockey is merely a stable-boy after all; yet a successful jockey receives more adulation than does the greatest of statesmen. A theatrical manager has been known to prepare the royal box for the reception of one of these celebrities; some of the manikins earn five thousand a year, one of them has been known to make twenty thousand pounds in a year; and that same youth received three thousand pounds for riding in one race. As to the flattery—the detestable flattery—which the mob bestows on good horsemen, it cannot be mentioned with patience. In sum, then, a form of insanity has attacked England, and we shall pay bitterly for the fit. The idle host who gather on the racecourse add nothing to the nation’s wealth; they are poisonous parasites whose influence destroys industry, honesty, and common manliness. And yet the whole hapless crew, winners and losers, call themselves “sportsmen.”



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I have said plainly enough that every villainous human being seems to take naturally to the Turf; but unfortunately the fools follow on the same track as that trodden by the villains, and thus the honest gentlemen who still support a vile institution have all their work set out in order to prevent the hawks from making a meal of the pigeons. One of the honest guardians of racing morality resigned in bitter despair some time ago, giving as his reason the assertion that he could trust nobody. Nobody! The man was a great lord, he was totally disinterested and utterly generous, he never betted a penny, and he only preferred to see the superb thoroughbreds gallop. Lavish he was to all about him—and he could trust nobody. It seems that this despairful nobleman had tolerably good reasons for his hasty departure, for we have had such a crop of villainies to reap this year as never was gathered before in the same time, and it appears plain that no animal will be allowed to win any prize unless the foul crew of betting-men accord their kind approval, and refrain from poisoning the brute.

I address myself directly, and with all the earnestness of which I am capable, to those young simpletons who think that it is a fine and knowing thing to stake money on a horse. Some poor silly creatures cannot be taught that they are not even backing a good chance; they will not learn that the success or failure of horses in important races is regulated by a clique of rascallions whose existence sullies the very light of day. Even if the simpleton chooses the very best horse in a race, it by no means follows that the creature will win—nay, the very excellence of an animal is all against its chances of success. The Ring—which is largely composed of well-to-do black-legs—will not let any man win too much. What earthly chance can a clerk or shopman or tradesman in Manchester or Derby have of knowing what passes in the hotels of Newmarket, the homes of trainers, the London betting-clubs? The information supplied so copiously by the sporting journals is as good as money can buy, but the writers on those papers are just as easily deceived as other people. Men are out every morning watching the horses take their exercise, and an animal cannot sneeze without the fact being telegraphed to the remotest corners of the country; but all this vigilance is useless when roguery comes into the field. Observe that for the moment I am not speaking about the morality of betting at all. I have my own opinion as to the mental tone of a man who is continually eyeing his neighbour's pocket and wondering what he can abstract therefrom. There is, and can be, no friendship save bottle friendship among the animals of prey who spend their time and energy on betting; and I know how callously they let a victim sink to ruin after they have sucked his substance to the last drop. The very face of a betting-man is enough to let you know what his soul is like; it is a face such as can be seen nowhere but on the racecourse



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or in the betting-club: the last trace of high thought has vanished, and, though the men may laugh and indulge in verbal horse-play, there is always something carnivorous about their aspect. They are sharp in a certain line, but true intelligence is rarely found among them. Strange to say, they are often generous with money if their sentimental side is fairly touched, but their very generosity is the lavishness of ostentation, and they seem to have no true kindness in them, nor do they appear capable of even shamming to possess the genuine helpful nature. Eternally on the watch for prey, they assume the essential nature of predatory animals; their notion of cleverness is to get the better of somebody, and their idea of intellectual effort is to lay cunning traps for fools to enter. Yes; the betting-ring is a bad school of morality, and the man who goes there as a fool and a victim too, often blossoms into a rogue and a plunderer.

With all this in my mind, I press my readers to understand that I leave the ethics of wagering alone for the present, and confine my attention strictly to the question of expediency. What is the use of wearing out nerve and brain on pondering an infinite maze of uncertainties? The rogues who command jockeys and even trainers on occasion can act with certainty, for they have their eye on the very tap-root of the Turf upas-tree. The noodles who read sporting prints and try to look knowing can only fumble about among uncertainties; they and their pitiful money help to swell the triumphs and the purses of rascals, and they fritter away good brain-power on calculations which have no sound basis whatever. Let us get to some facts, and let us all hope in the name of everything that is righteous and of good report that, when this article is read, some blind feather-brains may be induced to stop ere the inevitable final ruin descends upon them. What has happened in the doleful spring of this year? In 1887 a colt was brought out for the first time to run for the greatest of all Turf prizes. As usual, some bagatelle of a million or thereabouts had been betted on a horse which had won several races, and this animal was reckoned to be incapable of losing: but the untried animal shot out and galloped home an easy winner. So little was the successful brute distressed by his race that he began to caper out of sheer light-heartedness when he was led back to the enclosure, and he very soon cleared the place in his gambols—in fact, he could have run another race within half an hour after the first one. In the autumn this same winner strained a ligament; but in spite of the accident he ran for another important prize, and his lightning speed served him in good stead, for he came in second for the St. Leger. Well, in the spring this animal was entered in a handicap race, and the weight which he had to carry seemed so trifling that good judges thought he must romp over the course and win with ease. Hundreds of thousands of dolts



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rushed to wager their money on this chance, and the horse's owner, who is anything but a fool, proceeded to back his own property lavishly. Now a certain number of the betting-rogues appeared to know something—if I may be pardoned for using their repulsive phraseology—and, so long as any one was willing to bet on the horse, they were ready to lay against him. Still the pigeons would not take warning by this ominous symptom; they had chances enough to keep clear of danger, but they flocked into the snare in their confused fashion. A grain of common sense would have made them ask, "Why do these shrewd, hard men seem so certain that our favourite must lose? Are they the kind of persons who risk thousands in hard cash unless they know particularly well what they are doing? They bet with an air of certainty, though some of them must be almost ruined if they have made a miscalculation; they defy even the owner of the animal, and they cheerfully give him the opportunity of putting down thousands if he wishes to do so. There must be some reason for this assurance which at first sight looks so very overweening. Better have a care!"

Thus would common sense have counselled the victims; but, alas, common sense is usually left out of the composition of the betting-man's victim, and the flood of honest money rolled into the keeping of men who are certainly no more than indifferent honest. The day of the race came; the great gaping public dipped their hands in their pockets and accepted short odds about their precious certainty. When the flag fell for the start, the most wildly extravagant odds were offered against the favourite by the men who had been betting against him all along, for they saw very soon that they were safe. The poor brute on whose success so many thousands depended could not even gallop; he trailed on wearily for a little, without showing any sign of his old gallant fire and speed, and at last his hopeless rider stopped him. This story is in the mouths of all men; and now perhaps our simpletons maybe surprised to hear that the wretched animal which was the innocent cause of loss and misery was poisoned by a narcotic. In his efforts to move freely he strained himself, for the subtle drug deprived him of the power of using his limbs, and he could only sprawl and wrench his sinews. This is the fourth case of the kind which has recently occurred; and now clever judges have hit upon the cause which has disabled so many good horses, after the rascals of the Ring have succeeded in laying colossal amounts against them. Too many people know the dire effects of the morphia injections which are now so commonly used by weak individuals who fear pain and *ennui*; the same deadly drug is used to poison the horses. One touch with the sharp needle-point under the horse's elbow, and the subtle, numbing poison speeds through the arteries and paralyzes the nerves; a beautiful creature that comes out full of fire and courage is converted in a very few minutes



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into a dull helpless mass that has no more conscious volition than a machine. The animal remains on its feet, but exertion is impossible, and neither rein, whip, nor spur serves to stimulate the cunning poisoner's victim. About the facts there can now be no dispute: and this last wretched story supplies a coperstone to a pile of similar tales which has been in course of building during the past three or four years. Enraged men have become outspoken, and things are now boldly printed and circulated which were mentioned only in whispers long ago. The days of clumsy poisoning have gone by; the prowling villain no longer obtains entrance to a stable for the purpose of battering a horse's leg or driving a nail into the frog of the foot; the ancient crude devices are used no more, for science has become the handmaid of scoundrelism. When in 1811 a bad fellow squirted a solution of arsenic into a locked horse-trough, the evil trick was too clumsy to escape detection, and the cruel rogue was promptly caught and sent to the gallows; but we now have horse-poisoners who hold a secret similar to that which Palmer of Rugeley kept so long. I say "a secret," though every skilled veterinary surgeon knows how to administer morphia, and knows its effects; but the new practitioners contrive to send in the deadly injection of the drug in spite of the ceaseless vigilance of trainers, stablemen, detectives, and all other guards. Now I ask any rational man who may have been tempted to bet, Is it worth while? Leave out the morality for the present, and tell us whether you think it business-like to risk your money when you know that neither a horse's speed nor a trainer's skill will avail you when once an acute crew of sharpers have settled that a race must not be won by a certain animal. The miserable creature whose case has served me for a text was tried at home during the second week of April; he carried four stone more than the very useful and fast horse which ran against him, and he merely amused himself by romping alongside of his opponent. Again, when he took a preliminary canter before the drug had time to act, he moved with great strength and with the freedom of a greyhound; yet within three minutes he was no more than an inert mass of flesh and bone. I say to the inexperienced gambler, "Draw your own conclusions, and if, after studying my words, you choose to tempt fortune any more, your fate—your evil fate—be on your own head, for nothing that I or any one else can do will save you."

Not long before the melancholy and sordid case which I have described, and which is now gaining attention and rousing curiosity everywhere, a certain splendid steeplechaser was brought out to run for the most important of cross-country races. He was a famous horse, and, like our Derby winner, he bore the fortunes of a good many people. To the confusion and dismay of the men who made sure of his success, he was found to be stupified, and suffering from all the symptoms



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of morphia-poisoning! Not long ago an exquisite mare was brought out to run for the Liverpool Steeplechase, and, like the two I have already named, she was deemed to be absolutely certain of success. She came out merrily from her box; but soon she appeared to become dazed and silly; she could not move properly, and in trying to clear her first fence she staggered like a soddened drunkard and fell. The rascals had not become artistic poisoners at that date, and it was found that the poor mare had received the drug through a rather large puncture in her nostril.

The men whom I seek to cure are not worthy of much care; but they have dependants; and it is of the women and children that I think. Here is another pitfall into which the eager novice stumbles; and once more on grounds of expediency I ask the novice to consider his position. According to the decision of the peculiarly-constituted senate which rules racing affairs, I understand that, even if a horse starts in a race with health and training all in its favour, it by no means follows that he will win, or even run well. Cunning touches of the bridle, dexterous movements of body and limbs on the jockey's part, subtle checks applied so as to cramp the animal's stride—all these things tend to bring about surprising results. The horse that fails dismally in one race comes out soon afterwards and wins easily in more adverse circumstances. I grow tired of the unlucky catalogue of mean swindles, and I should be glad if I never heard of the Turf again; though, alas, I have little hope of that so long as betting-shops are open, and so long as miserable women have the power to address letters to me! I can only implore those who are not stricken with the gambler's fever to come away from danger while yet there is time. A great nobleman like Lord Hartington or Lord Rodney may amuse himself by keeping racers; he gains relaxation by running out from London to see his pretty colts and fillies gallop, and he needs not to care very much whether they win or lose, for it is only the mild excitement and the change of scene that he wants. The wealthy people who go to Newmarket seek pleasant company as much as anything, and the loss of a few hundreds hardly counts in their year's expenses. But the poor noodle who can hardly afford to pay his fare and hotel bill—why should he meddle with horses? If an animal is poisoned, the betting millionaire who backs it swallows his chagrin and thinks no more of the matter, but the wretched clerk who has risked a quarter's salary cannot take matters so easily. Racing is the rich man's diversion, and men of poor or moderate means cannot afford to think about it. The beautiful world is full of entertainment for those who search wisely; then why should any man vex heart and brain by meddling with a pursuit which gives him no pleasure, and which cannot by any chance bring him profit? I have no pity for a man who ascribes his ruin to betting, and I contemn those paltry weaklings whose cases I



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study and collect from the newspapers. Certainly there are enough of them! A man who bets wants to make money without work, and that on the face of it is a dishonourable aspiration; if he robs some one, I do not in the faintest degree try to palliate his crime—he is a responsible being, or ought to be one, and he has no excuse for pilfering. I should never aid any man who suffered through betting, and I would not advise any one else to do so. My appeal to the selfish instincts of the gudgeons who are hooked by the bookmakers is made only for the sake of the helpless creatures who suffer for the follies and blundering cupidity of the would-be sharper. I abhor the bookmakers, but I do not blame them alone; the sight of means to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done, and they are doubtless tempted to roguery by the very simpletons who complain when they meet the reward of their folly. I am solely concerned with the innocents who fare hardly because of their selfish relatives' reckless want of judgment, and for them, and them alone, my efforts are engaged.

*May, 1888*

### *DEGRADED MEN.*

The man of science derives suggestive knowledge from the study of mere putrefaction; he places an infusion of common hay-seeds or meat or fruit in his phials, and awaits events; presently a drop from one of the infusions is laid on the field of the microscope, and straightly the economy of a new and strange kingdom is seen by the observer. The microscopist takes any kind of garbage; he watches the bacteria and their mysterious development, and he reaches at last the most significant conclusions regarding the health and growth and diseases of the highest organizations. The student of human nature must also bestow his attention on disease of mind if he would attain to any real knowledge of the strange race to which he belongs. We develop, it is true, but there are modes and modes of development. I have often pointed out that a steady process of degeneration goes on side by side with the unfolding of new and healthy powers in the animal and vegetable kingdoms. The great South American lizards grow strong and splendid in hue amid the rank freedom of pampas or forest; but their poor relatives in the sunless caves of Transylvania grow milky white, flabby, and stone-blind. The creatures in the Kentucky caves are all aborted in some way or other; the birds in far-off islands lose the power of flight, and the shrivelled wings gradually sink under the skin, and show us only a tiny network of delicate bones when the creature is stripped to the skeleton. The condor soars magnificently in the thin air over the Andes—it can rise like a kite or drop like a thunderbolt: the weeka of New Zealand can hardly get out of the way of a stick aimed by an active man. The proud forest giant sucks up the pouring moisture from the great Brazilian river; the shoots that rise under the shadow of the monster tree are weakened and blighted by lack of



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light and free air. The same astounding work goes on among the beings who are so haughty in their assumption of the post of creation's lords. The healthy child born of healthy parents grows up amid pure air and pure surroundings; his tissues are nourished by strength-giving food, he lives according to sane rules, and he becomes round-limbed, full-chested, and vigorous. The poor little victim who first sees the light in the Borough or Shadwell, or in the noxious alleys of our reeking industrial towns, receives foul air, mere atmospheric garbage, into his lungs; he becomes thin-blooded, his unwholesome pallor witnesses to his weakness of vitality, his muscles are atrophied, and even his hair is ragged, lustreless, ill-nurtured. In time he transmits his feebleness to his successors; and we have the creatures who stock our workhouses, hospitals, and our gaols—for moral degradation always accompanies radical degradation of the physique.

So, if we study the larger aspects of society, we find that in all grades we have large numbers of individuals who fall out of the line that is steadfastly progressing, and become stragglers, camp-followers—anything you will. Let a cool and an unsentimental observer bend himself to the study of degraded human types, and he will learn things that will sicken his heart if he is weak, and strengthen him in his resolve to work gallantly during his span of life if he is strong. Has any one ever fairly tried to face the problem of degradation? Has any one ever learned how it is that a distinct form of mental disease seems to lurk in all sorts of unexpected fastnesses, ready to breathe a numbing and poisonous vapour on those who are not fortified against the moral malaria? I am not without experience of the fell chances and changes of life; I venture therefore to use some portion of the knowledge that I have gathered in order to help to fortify the weak and make the strong wary.

If you wander on the roads in our country, you are almost sure to meet men whom you instinctively recognize as fallen beings. What their previous estate in life may have been you cannot tell, but you know that there has been a fall, and that you are looking on a moral wreck. The types are superficially varied, but an essential sameness, not always visible at first sight, connects them and enables you to class them as you would class the specimens in a gallery of the British Museum. As you walk along on a lonely highway, you meet a man who carries himself with a kind of jaunty air. His woeful boots show glimpses of bare feet, his clothes have a bright gloss in places, and they hang untidily; but his coat is buttoned with an attempt at smartness, and his ill-used hat is set on rakishly. You note that the man wears a moustache, and you learn in some mysterious way that he was once accustomed to be very trim and spruce in person. When he speaks, you find that you have a hint of a cultivated accent; he sounds the termination "ing" with precision, and



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you also notice that such words as “here,” “there,” “over,” are pronounced with a peculiar broad vowel sound at the end. He cannot look you boldly in the face, and it is hard to catch a sight of his eyes, but you may take for granted that the eyes are bad and shifty. The cheeks are probably a little pendulous, and the jaw hangs with a certain slackness. The whole visage looks as if it had been cast in a tolerably good mould and had somehow run out of shape a little. Your man is fluent and communicative; he mouths his sentences with a genteel roll in his voice, and he punctuates his talk with a stealthy, insincere laugh which hardly rises above the dignity of a snigger.

Now how does such a man come to be tramping aimlessly on a public road? He does not know that he is going to any place in particular; he is certainly not walking for the sake of health, though he needs health rather badly. Why is he in this plight? You do not need to wait long for a solution, if the book of human experience has been your study. That man is absolutely certain to begin bewailing his luck—it is always “luck.” Then he has a choice selection of abuse to bestow on large numbers of people who have trodden him down—he is always down-trodden; and he proves to you that, but for the ingratitude of A, the roguery of B, the jealousy of C, the undeserved credit obtained by the despicable D, he would be in “a far different position to-day, sir.” If he is an old officer—and a few gentlemen who once bore Her Majesty’s commission are now to be found on the roads, or in casual wards, or lounging about low skittle-alleys and bagatelle or billiard tables—he will allude to the gambling that went on in the regiment. “How could a youngster keep out of the swim?” All went well with him until he took to late hours and devilled bones; “then in the mornings we were all ready for a peg; and I should like to see the man who could get ready for parade after a hard night unless he had something in the shape of a reviver.” So he prates on. He curses the colonel, the commander-in-chief, and the Army organization in general; he gives leering reminiscences of garrison belles—reminiscences that make a pure minded man long to inflict some sort of chastisement on him; and thus, while he thinks he is impressing you with an overpowering sense of his bygone rank and fashion, he really unfolds the history of a feeble unworthy fellow who carries a strong tinge of rascality about him. He is always a victim, and he illustrates the unvarying truth of the maxim that a dupe is a rogue minus cleverness. The final crash which overwhelmed him was of course a horse-racing blunder. He would have recovered his winter’s losses had not a gang of thieves tampered with the favourite for the City and Suburban. “Do you think, sir, that Highflyer could not have given Stonemason three stone and a beating?” You modestly own your want of acquaintance with the powers of the famous quadrupeds, and the infatuated



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dupe goes on, "I saw how Bill Whipcord was riding; he eased at the corner, when I wouldn't have taken two thousand for my bets, and you could see that he let Stonemason up. I had taken seven to four eight times in hundreds, and that broke me." The ragged raffish man never thinks that he was quite ready to plunder other people; he grows inarticulate with rage only when he remembers how he was bitten instead of being the biter. His watery eyes slant as you near a roadside inn, and he is certain to issue an invitation. Then you see what really brought him low. It may be a lovely warm day, when the acrid reek of alcohol is more than usually abhorrent; but he must take something strong that will presently inflame the flabby bulge of his cheeks and set his evil eyes watering more freely than ever. Gin is his favourite refreshment, because it is cheap, and produces stupefaction more rapidly than any other liquid. Very probably he will mix gin and ale in one horrid draught—and in that case you know that he is very far gone indeed on the downward road. If he can possibly coax the change out of you when the waiter puts it down he will do so, for he cannot resist the gleam of the coins, and he will improvise the most courageous lies with an ease which inspires awe. He thanks you for nothing; he hovers between cringing familiarity and patronage; and, when you gladly part with him, he probably solaces himself by muttering curses on your meanness or your insolence. Once more—how does the faded military person come to be on the roads? We shall come to that presently.

Observe the temporary lord of the tap-room when you halt on the dusty roads and search for tea or lunch. He is in black, and a soiled handkerchief is wound round his throat like an eel. He wears a soft felt hat which has evidently done duty as a night-cap many times, and he tries to bear himself as though the linen beneath his pinned-up coat were of priceless quality. You know well enough that he has no shirt on, for he would sell one within half an hour if any Samaritan fitted him out. His boots are carefully tucked away under the bench, and his sharp knees seem likely to start through their greasy casing. As soon as he sees you he determines to create an impression, and he at once draws you into the conversation. "Now, sir, you and I are scholars—I am an old Balliol man myself—and I was explaining to these good lads the meaning of the phrase which had puzzled them, as it has puzzled many more. *Casus belli*, sir—that is what we find in this local rag of a journal; and *status quo ante bellum*. Now, sir, these ignorant souls couldn't tell what was meant, so I have been enlightening them. I relax my mind in this way, though you would hardly think it the proper place for a Balliol man, while that overfed brute up at the Hall can drive out with a pair of two-hundred-guinea bays, sir. Fancy a gentleman and a scholar being in this company, sir! Now Jones, the landlord



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there, is a good man in his way—oh, no thanks Jones; it is not a compliment!—and I'd like to see the man who dared say that I'm not speaking the truth, for I used to put my hands up like a good one when we were boys at the old 'varsity, sir. Jones, this gentleman would like something; and I don't mind taking a double dose of Glenlivet with a brother-scholar and a gentleman like myself." So the mawkish creature maunders on until one's gorge rises; but the stolid carters, the idle labourers, the shoemaker from the shop round the corner, admire his eloquence, and enjoy the luxury of pitying a parson and an aristocrat. How very numerous are the representatives of this type, and how unspeakably odious they are! This foul weed in dirty clothing assumes the pose of a bishop; he swears at the landlord, he patronizes the shoemaker—who is his superior in all ways—he airs the feeble remnants of his Latin grammar and his stock quotations. He will curse you if you refuse him drink, and he will describe you as an impostor or a cad; while, if you are weak enough to gratify his taste for spirits, he will glower at you over his glass, and sicken you with fulsome flattery or clumsy attempts at festive wit. Enough of this ugly creature, whose baseness insults the light of God's day! We know how he will end; we know how he has been a fraud throughout his evil life, and we can hardly spare even pity for him. It is well if the fellow has no lady-wife in some remote quarter—wife whom he can rob or beg from, or even thrash, when he searches her out after one of his rambles from casual ward to casual ward.

In the wastes of the great cities the army of the degraded swarm. Here is the loose-lipped rakish wit, who tells stories in the common lodging-house kitchen. He has a certain brilliancy about him which lasts until the glassy gleam comes over his eyes, and then he becomes merely blasphemous and offensive. He might be an influential writer or politician, but he never gets beyond spouting in a pot-house debating club, and even that chance of distinction does not come unless he has written an unusually successful begging-letter. Here too is the broken professional man. His horrid face is pustuled, his hands are like unclean dough, he is like a creature falling to pieces; yet he can show you pretty specimens of handwriting, and, if you will steady him by giving him a drink of ale, he will write your name on the edge of a newspaper in copper-plate characters or perform some analogous feat. All the degraded like to show off the remains of their accomplishments, and you may hear some odious being warbling. "*Ah, che la morte!*" with quite the air of a leading tenor. In the dreadful purlieus lurk the poor submissive ne'er-do-well, the clerk who has been imprisoned for embezzlement, the City merchant's son who is reduced to being the tout of a low bookmaker, the preacher who began as a youthful phenomenon and ended by embezzling the Christmas dinner fund, the



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forlorn brute whose wife and children have fled from him, and who spends his time between the police-cells and the resorts of the vilest. If you could know the names of the tramps who yell and make merry over their supper in the murky kitchen, you would find that people of high consideration would be touched very painfully could they be reminded of the existence of certain relatives. Degraded, degraded are they all! And why?

The answer is brief, and I have left it until last, for no particular elaboration is needed. From most painful study I have come to the conclusion that nearly all of our degraded men come to ruin through idleness in the first instance; drink, gambling, and other forms of debauch follow, but idleness is the root-evil. The man who begins by saying, "It's a poor heart that never rejoices," or who refers to the danger of making Jack a dull boy, is on a bad road. Who ever heard of a worker—a real toiler—becoming degraded? Worn he may be, and perhaps dull to the influence of beauty and refinement; but there is always some nobleness about him. The man who gives way to idleness at once prepares his mind as a soil for evil seeds; the universe grows tiresome to him; the life-weariness of the old Romans attacks him in an ignoble form, and he begins to look about for distractions. Then his idleness, from being perhaps merely amusing, becomes offensive and suspicious; drink takes hold upon him; his moral sense perishes; only the husks of his refinement remain; and by and by you have the slouching wanderer who is good for nothing on earth. He is despised of men, and, were it not that we know the inexhaustible bounty of the Everlasting Pity, we might almost think that he was forgotten of Heaven. Stand against idleness. Anything that age, aches, penury, hard trial may inflict on the soul is trifling. Idleness is the great evil which leads to all others. Therefore work while it is day.

*September, 1888.*

### *A REFINEMENT OF "SPORTING" CRUELTY.*

I firmly believe in the sound manhood of the English people, and I know that in any great emergency they would rise and prove themselves true and gallant of soul; but we happen for the time to have amongst us a very large class of idlers, and these idlers are steadily introducing habits and customs which no wise observer can regard without solemn apprehensions. The simple Southampton poet has told us what "idle hands" are apt to do under certain guidance, and his saying—truism as it appears—should be studied with more regard to its vital meaning. The idlers crave for novelties; they seek for new forms of distraction; they seem really to live only when they are in the midst of delirious excitement. Unhappily their feverish unrest is apt to communicate itself to men who are not naturally idlers, and thus their influence moves outwards like some vast hurtful wind blown from a pestilent region. During the past few years the idlers have invented a form of amusement which for sheer atrocity and wanton cruelty is



unparalleled in the history of England. I shall say some words about this remarkable amusement, and I trust that gentle women who have in them the heart of compassion, mothers who have sons to be ruined, fathers who have purses to bleed, may aid in putting down an evil that gathers strength every day.



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Most of my readers know what the "sport" of coursing is; but, for the benefit of strictly town-bred folk, I may roughly indicate the nature of the pursuit as it was practised in bygone times. A brace of greyhounds were placed together in the slips—that is, in collars which fly open when the man who holds the dogs releases a knot; and then a line of men moved slowly over the fields. When a hare rose and ran for her life, the slipper allowed her a fair start, and then he released the dogs. The mode of reckoning the merits of the hounds is perhaps a little too complicated for the understanding of non-"sporting" people; but I may broadly put it that the dog which gives the hare most trouble, the dog that causes her to dodge and turn the oftenest in order to save her life, is reckoned the winner. Thus the greyhound which reaches the hare first receives two points; poor pussy then makes an agonized rush to right or left, and, if the second dog succeeds in passing his opponent and turning the hare again, he receives a point, and so on. The old-fashioned open-air sport was cruel enough, for it often happened that the hare ran for two or three miles with her ferocious pursuers hard on her track, and every muscle of her body was strained with poignant agony; but there is this to be said—the men had healthy, matchless exercise on breezy plains and joyous uplands, they tramped all day until their limbs were thoroughly exercised, and they earned sound repose by their wholesome exertions. Moreover, the element of fair-play enters into coursing when pursued in the open spaces. Pussy knows every foot of the ground; nightly she steals gently to the fields where her succulent food is found, and in the morning she steals back again to her tiny nest, or form, amid the soft grass. All day she lies chewing the cud in her fashion, and moving her delicate ears hither and thither, lest fox or stoat or dog should come upon her unawares; and at nightfall she steals away once more. Every run, every tuft of grass, every rising of the ground is known to her; and, when at last the tramp of the approaching beaters rouses her, she rushes away with a distinct advantage over the dogs. She knows exactly whither to go; the other animals do not, and usually, on open ground, the quarry escapes. I do not think that any greyhound living could catch one of the hares now left on the Suffolk marshes; and there are many on the great Wiltshire plains which are quite capable of rushing at top speed for three miles and more. The chase in the open is cruel—there is no denying it—for poor puss dies many deaths ere she bids her enemies good-bye; but still she has a chance for life, and thus the sport, inhuman as it is, has a praiseworthy element of fairness in it.



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But the betting-man, the foul product of civilization's depravity, cast his eye on the old-fashioned sport and invaded the field. He found the process of walking up the game not much to his taste, for he cares only to exercise his leathern lungs; moreover, the courses were few and far between and the chances of making wagers were scanty. He set himself to meditate, and it struck him that, if a good big collection of hares could be got together, it would be possible to turn them out one by one, so that betting might go on as fast and as merrily on the coursing-ground as at the roulette-table. Thus arose a "sport" which is educating many, many thousands in callousness and brutality. Here and there over England are dotted great enclosed parks, and the visitor is shown wide and mazy coverts where hares swarm. Plenty of food is strewn over the grass, and in the wildest of winters pussy has nothing to fear—until the date of her execution arrives. The animals are not natives of those enclosures; they are netted in droves on the Wiltshire plains or on the Lancashire moors, and packed off like poultry to the coursing-ground. There their life is calm for a long time; no poachers or lurchers or vermin molest them; stillness is maintained, and the hares live in peace. But one day there comes a roaring crowd to the park, and, though pussy does not know it, her good days are passed. Look at the mob that surges and bellows on the stands and in the enclosures. They are well dressed and comfortable, but a more unpleasant gang could not be seen. Try to distinguish a single face that shows kindness or goodness—you fail; this rank roaring crowd is made up of betting-men and dupes, and it is hard to say which are the worse. There is no horse-racing in the winter, and so these people have come out to see a succession of innocent creatures die, and to bet on the event. The slow coursing of the old style would not do for the fiery betting-man; but we shall have fun fast and furious presently. The assembly seems frantic; flashy men with eccentric coats and gaudy hats of various patterns stand about and bellow their offers to bet; feverish dupes move hither and thither, waiting for chances; the rustle of notes, the chink of money, sound here and there, and the immense clamour swells and swells, till a stunning roar dulls the senses, and to an imaginative gazer it seems as though a horde of fiends had been let loose to make day hideous. A broad smooth stretch of grass lies opposite to the stands, and at one end of this half-mile stretch there runs a barrier, the bottom of which is fringed with straw and furze. If you examined that barrier, you would find that it really opens into a wide dense copse, and that a hare or rabbit which whisks under it is safe on the far side. At the other side of this field a long fenced lane opens, and seems to be closed at the blind end by a wide door. To the right of the blind lane is a tiny hut surrounded by bushes, and by the



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side of the hut a few scattered men loaf in a purposeless way. Presently a red-coated man canters across the smooth green, and then the diabolical tumult of the stands reaches ear-splitting intensity. Your betting-man is cool enough in reality; but he likes to simulate mad eagerness until it appears as though the swollen veins of face or throat would burst. And what is going on at the closed end of that blind lane? On the strip of turf around the wide field the demure trainers lead their melancholy-looking dogs. Each greyhound is swathed in warm clothing, but they all look wretched; and, as they pick their way along with dainty steps, no one would guess that the sight of a certain poor little animal would convert each doleful hound into an incarnate fury. Two dogs are led across to the little hut—the bellow of the Ring sounds hoarsely on—and the chosen pair of dogs disappear behind the shrubs. And now what is passing on the farther side of that door which closes the lane? A hare is comfortably nestling under a clump of furze when a soft step sounds near her. A man! Pussy would like to move to right or left; but, lo, here are other men! Decidedly she must move forward. Oh, joy! A swinging door rises softly, and shows her a delightful long lane that seems to open on to a pleasant open country. She hops gaily onward, and then a little uneasiness overtakes her; she looks back, but that treacherous door has swung down again, and there is only one road for her now. Softly she steals onward to the mouth of the lane, and then she finds a slanting line of men who wave their arms at her when she tries to shoot aside. A loud roar bursts from the human animals on the stand, and then a hush falls. Now or never, pussy! The far-off barrier must be gained, or all is over. The hare lowers her ears and dashes off; then from the hut comes a staggering man, who hangs back with all his strength as a pair of ferocious dogs writhe and strain in the leash; the hounds rise on their haunches, and paw wildly with their fore-feet, and they struggle forward until puss has gone a fair distance, while the slipper encourages them with low guttural sounds. Crack! The tense collars fly, and the arrowy rush of the snaky dogs follows. Puss flicks her ears—she hears a thud, thud, wallop, wallop; and she knows the supreme moment has come. Her sinews tighten like bowstrings, and she darts on with the lightning speed of despair. The grim pursuers near her; she almost feels the breath of the foremost. Twitch!—and with a quick convulsive effort she sheers aside, and her enemy sprawls on. But the second dog is ready to meet her, and she must swirl round again. The two serpentine savages gather themselves together and launch out in wild efforts to reach her; they are upon her—she must dart round again, and does so under the very feet of the baffled dogs. Her eyes are starting with overmastering terror; again and again she sweeps from right to left, and again and again the staunch hounds



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dash along in her track. Pussy fails fast; one dog reaches her, and she shrieks as she feels his ferocious jaws touch her; but he snatches only a mouthful of fur, and there is another respite. Then at last one of the pursuers balances himself carefully, his wicked head is raised, he strikes, and the long tremulous shriek of despair is drowned in the hoarse crash of cheering from the mob. Brave sport, my masters! Gallant Britons ye are! Ah, how I should like to let one of you career over that field of death with a brace of business-like boarhounds behind you!

There is no slackening of the fun, for the betting-men must be kept busy. Men grow frantic with excitement; young fools who should be at their business risk their money heedlessly, and generally go wrong. If the hares could only know, they might derive some consolation from the certainty that, if they are going to death, scores of their gallant sporting persecutors are going to ruin. Time after time, in monotonous succession, the same thing goes on through the day—the agonized hares twirl and strain; the fierce dogs employ their superb speed and strength; the unmanly gang of men howl like beasts of prey; and the sweet sun looks upon all!

Women, what do you think of that for Englishmen's pastime? Recollect that the mania for this form of excitement is growing more intense daily; as much as one hundred thousand pounds may depend on a single course—for not only the mob in the stands are betting, but thousands are awaiting each result that is flashed off over the wires; and, although you may be far away in remote country towns, your sons, your husbands, your brothers, may be watching the clicking machine that records the results in club and hotel—they may be risking their substance in a lottery which is at once childish and cruel.

There is not one word to be said in favour of this vile game. The old-fashioned courser at least got exercise and air; but the modern betting-man wants neither; he wants only to make wagers and add to his pile of money. For him the coursing meetings cannot come too often; the swarming gudgeons flock to his net; he arranges the odds almost as he chooses—with the help of his friends; and simpletons who do not know a greyhound from a deerhound bet wildly—not on dogs, but on names. The "sport" has all the uncertainty of roulette, and it is villainously cruel into the bargain. Amid all those thousands you never hear one word of pity for the stricken little creature that is driven out, as I have said, for execution; they watch her agonies, and calculate the chances of pouching their sovereigns. That is all.



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Here then is another vast engine of demoralization set going, just as if the Turf were not a blight of sufficient intensity! A young man ventures into one of those cruel rings, buys a card, and resolves to risk pounds or shillings. If he is unfortunate, he may be saved; but, curiously enough, it often happens that a greenhorn who does not know one greyhound from another blunders into a series of winning bets. If he wins, he is lost, for the fever seizes him; he does not know what odds are against him, and he goes on from deep to deep of failure and disaster. Well for him if he escapes entire ruin! I have drawn attention to this new evil because I have peculiar opportunities of studying the inner life of our society, and I find that the gambling epidemic is spreading among the middle-classes. To my mind these coursing massacres should be made every whit as illegal as dog-fighting or bull-baiting, for I can assure our legislators that the temptation offered by the chances of rapid gambling is eating like a corrosive poison into the young generation. Surely Englishmen, even if they want to bet, need not invent a medium for betting which combines every description of noxious cruelty! I ask the aid of women. Let them set their faces against tin's horrid sport, and it will soon be known no more.

If the silly bettors themselves could only understand their own position, they might be rescued. Let it be distinctly understood that the bookmaker cannot lose, no matter how events may go. On the other hand, the man who makes wagers on what he is pleased to term his "fancies" has everything against him. The chances of his choosing a winner in the odious new sport are hardly to be mathematically stated, and it may be mathematically proved that he must lose. Then, apart from the money loss, what an utterly ignoble and unholy pursuit this trapped-hare coursing is for a manly man! Surely the heart of compassion in any one not wholly brutalized should be moved at the thought of those cabined, cribbed, confined little creatures that yield up their innocent lives amid the remorseless cries of a callous multitude. Poor innocents! Is it not possible to gamble without making God's creatures undergo torture? If a man were to turn a cat into a close yard and set dogs upon it, he would be imprisoned, and his name would be held up to scorn. What is the difference between cat and hare?

*March, 1887.*

*LIBERTY.*

"What things are done in thy name!" The lady who spoke thus of Liberty had lived a high and pure life; all good souls were attracted to her; and it seems strange that so sweet and pure and beautiful a creature could have grown up in the vile France of the days before the Revolution. She kept up the traditions of gentle and seemingly courtesy even at times when Sardanapalus Danton was perforce admitted to her *salon*; and in an age of suspicion and vile scandal she kept a stainless name, for even the

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most degraded pamphleteer in Paris dared do no more than hint a fault and hesitate dislike. But this lady went to the scaffold with many and many of the young, the beautiful, the brave; and her sombre satire, "What things are done in thy name!" was remembered long afterwards when the despots and the invading alien had in turn placed their feet on the neck of devoted France. "What things are done in thy name!" Yes; and we, in this modern world, might vary the saying a little and exclaim, "What things are said in thy name!"—for we have indeed arrived at the era of liberty, and the gospel of Rousseau is being preached with fantastic variations by people who think that any speech which apes the forms of logic is reasonable and that any desire which is expressed in a sufficiently loud howl should be at once gratified. We pride ourselves on our knowledge and our reasoning power; but to judicious observers it often seems that those who talk loudest have a very thin vein of knowledge, and no reasoning faculty that is not imitative.

By all means let us have "freedom," but let us also consider our terms, and fix the meaning of the things that we say. Perhaps I should write "the things that we think we say," because so many of those who make themselves heard do not weigh words at all, and they imagine themselves to be uttering cogent truths when they are really giving us the babble of Bedlam. If ladies and gentlemen who rant about freedom would try to emancipate themselves from the dominion of meaningless words, we should all fare better; but we find a large number of public personages using perfectly grammatical series of phrases without dreaming for a moment that their grave sentences are pure gibberish. A few simple questions addressed in the Socratic manner to certain lights of thought might do much good. For instance, we might say, "Do you ever speak of being free from good health, or free from a good character, or free from prosperity?" I fancy not; and yet copiously talkative individuals employ terms quite as hazy and silly as those which I have indicated.

We have gone very far in the direction of scientific discovery, and we have a large number of facts at our disposal; but some of us have quite forgotten that true liberty comes only from submitting to wise guidance. Old Sandy Mackay, in Alton Locke, declared that he would never bow down to a bit of brains: and this highly-independent attitude is copied by persons who fail to see that bowing to the bit of brains is the only mode of securing genuine freedom. If our daring logicians would grant that every man should have liberty to lead his life as he chooses, so long as he hurts neither himself nor any other individual nor the State, then one might follow their argument; but a plain homespun proposal like that of mine is not enough for your advanced thinker. In England he says, "Let us have deliverance from all restrictions;" in Russia he says, "Anarchy is the only cure for existing evils." For



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centuries past the earth has been deluged with blood and the children of men have been scourged by miseries unspeakable, merely because powerful men and powerful bodies of men have not chosen to learn the meaning of the word "liberty." "How miserable you make the world for one another, O feeble race of men!" So said our own melancholy English cynic; and he had singularly good reason for his plaint. Rapid generalization is nearly always mischievous; unless we learn to form correct and swift judgments on every faculty of life as it comes before us, we merely stumble from error to error. No cut-and-dried maxim ever yet was fit to guide men through their mysterious existence; the formalist always ends by becoming a bungler, and the most highly-developed man, if he is content to be no more than a thinking-machine, is harmful to himself and harmful to the community which has the ill-luck to harbour him. If we take cases from history, we ought to find it easy enough to distinguish between the men who sought liberty wisely and those who were restive and turbulent. A wise man or a wise nation knows the kind of restraint which is good; the fool, with his feather-brained theories, never knows what is good for him—he mistakes eternal justice for tyranny, he rebels against facts that are too solid for him—and we know what kind of an end he meets. Some peculiarly daring personages carry their spirit of resistance beyond the bounds of our poor little earth. Only lately many of us read with a shock of surprise the passionate asseveration of a gifted woman who declared that it was a monstrous wrong and wickedness that ever she had been born. Job said much the same thing in his delirium; but our great novelist put forth her complaint as the net outcome of all her thought and culture. We only need to open an ordinary newspaper to find that the famous writer's folly is shared by many weaker souls; and the effect on the mind of a shrewd and contented man is so startling that it resembles the emotion roused by grotesque wit. The whole story of the ages tells us dismally what happens when unwise people choose to claim the measure of liberty which they think good; but somehow, though knowledge has come, wisdom lingers, and the grim old follies rear themselves rankly among us in the age of reason.

When we remember the Swiss mountaineers who took their deaths joyously in defence of their homes, when we read of the devoted brave one who received the sheaf of spears in his breast and broke the oppressor's array, none of us can think of mere vulgar rebellion. The Swiss were fighting to free themselves from wrongs untold; and we should hold them less than men if they had tamely submitted to be caged like poultry. Again, we feel a thrill when we read the epitaph which says, "Gladly we would have rested had we won freedom. We have lost, and very gladly rest." The very air of bravery, of steady self-abnegation seems to exhale from the sombre, triumphant words.



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Russia is the chosen home of tyranny now, but her day of brightness will come again. It is safe to prophesy so much, for I remember what happened at one time of supreme peril. Prussia and Austria and Italy lay crushed and bleeding under the awful power of Napoleon, and it seemed as though Russia must be wiped out from the list of nations when the great army of invaders poured in relentless multitudes over the stricken land. The conqueror appeared to have the very forces of nature in his favour, and his hosts moved on without a check and without a failure of organization. So perfectly had he planned the minutest details that, although his stations were scattered from the Beresina to the Seine, not so much as a letter was lost during the onward movement. How could the doomed country resist? So thought all Europe. But the splendid old Russian, the immortal Koutousoff, had felt the pulse of his nation, and he was confident, while all the other chiefs felt as though the earth were rocking under them. The time for the extinction of Russia had not come; a throb of fierce emotion passed over the country; the people rose like one man, and the despot found himself held in check by rude masses of men for whom death had scant terrors. Koutousoff had a mighty people to support him, and he would have swept back the horde of spoilers, even if the winter had not come to his aid. Russia was but a dark country then, as now, but the conduct of the myriads who dared to die gave a bright presage for the future. Who can blame the multitudes of Muscovites who sealed their wild protest with their blood? The common soldiers were but slaves, yet they would have suffered a degradation worse than slavery had they succumbed, while, as to the immense body of people—that nation within a nation—which answered to our upper and middle classes, they would have tasted the same woes which at length drove Germany to frenzy and made simple burghers prefer bitter death to the tyranny of the French. The rulers of Russia have stained her records foully since the days of 1812, but their worst sins cannot blot out the memory of the national uprising. Years are but trivial; seventy-six of them seem a long time; but those who study history broadly know that the dawn of a better future for Russia showed its first gleam when the aroused and indignant race rose and went forward to die before the French cannon. When next Russia rises, it will be against a tyranny only second to Napoleon's in virulence—it will be against the terror that rules her now from within; and her success will be applauded by the world.

The Italians, who first waited and plotted, and then fought desperately under Garibaldi, had every reason to cry out for freedom. If they had remained merely whimpering under the Bourbon and Austrian whips, they would have deserved to be spurned by all who bear the hearts of men. They were denied the meanest privileges of humanity; they lived in a fashion which was rather like the violent, oppressed, hideous



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existence which men imagine in evil dreams, and at length they struck, and declared for liberty or annihilation. Perhaps they did not gain much in the way of immediate material good, but that only makes their splendid movement the more admirable. They fought for a magnificent idea, and even now, though the populace have to bear a taxation three times as great as any known before in their history, the ordinary Italian will say, "Yes, signor—the taxes are very heavy; we toil very hard and pay much money; but who counts money? We are a nation now—a real nation; Italy is united and free." That is the gist of the matter. The people were bitterly ground down, and they are content to suffer privation in the present so long as they can ensure freedom from alien rule in the future. Nothing that the most hardly-entreated Briton suffers in any circumstances could equal the agonies of degradation borne by the people of the Peninsula, and their emancipation was hailed as if it had been a personal benefaction by all that was wisest and best in European society. The millions who turned out to welcome Garibaldi as if he had been an adored sovereign all had a true appreciation of real liberty; the masses were right in their instinct, and it was left for hysterical "thinkers" to shriek their deluded ideas in these later days.

"But surely the Irish rose for freedom in 1641?" I can almost imagine some clever correspondent asking me that question with a view to taking me in a neat trap. It is true enough that the Irish rose; but here again we must learn to discriminate between cases. How did the wild folk rise? Did they go out like the Thousand of Marsala and pit themselves against odds of five and six to one? Did they show any chivalry? Alas for the wicked story! The rebels behaved like cruel wild beasts; they were worse than polecats in an aviary, and they met with about the same resistance as the polecats would meet. They stripped the Ulster farmers and their families naked, and sent them out in the bitter weather; they hung on the skirts of the agonized crowd; the men cut down the refugees wholesale, and even the little boys of the insurgent party were taught to torture and kill the unhappy children of the flying farmers. Poor little infants fell in the rear of the doomed host, but no mother was allowed to succour her dying offspring, and the innocents expired in unimaginable suffering. The stripped fugitives crowded into Dublin, and there the plague carried them off wholesale. The rebels had gained liberty with a vengeance, and they had their way for ten years and more. Their liberty was degraded by savagery; they ruled Ireland at their own sweet will; they dwelt in anarchy until the burden of their iniquity grew too grievous for the earth to bear. Then their villainous freedom was suddenly ended by no less a person than Oliver Cromwell, and the curses, the murders, the unspeakable vileness of ten bad years all were atoned for in wild



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wrath and ruin. Now is it not marvellous that, while the murderers were free, they were poverty-stricken and most wretched? As soon as Cromwell's voice had ceased to pronounce the doom on the unworthy, the great man began his work of regeneration; and under his iron hand the country which had been miserable in freedom became prosperous, happy, and contented. There is no mistaking the facts, for men of all parties swore that the six years which followed the storm of Drogheda were the best in all Ireland's history. Had Cromwell only lived longer, or had there been a man fit to follow him, then England and Ireland would be happier this day.

In our social life the same conditions hold for the individual as hold for nations in the assembly of the world's peoples. Freedom—true freedom—means liberty to live a beneficent and innocent life. As soon as an individual chooses to set up as a law to himself, then we have a right—nay, it is our bounden duty—to examine his pretensions. If the sense of the wisest in our community declares him unfit to issue dicta for the guidance of men, then we must promptly suppress him; if we do not, our misfortunes are on our own heads. The “independent” man may cry out about liberty and the rest as much as he likes, but we cannot afford to heed him. We simply say, “You foolish person, liberty, as you are pleased to call it, would be poison to you. The best medicines for your uneasy mind are reproof and restraint; if those fail to act on you, then we must try what the lash will do for you.”

Let us have liberty for the wise and the good—we know them well enough when we see them; and no sophist dare in his heart declare that any charlatan ever mastered men permanently. Liberty for the wise and good—yes, and wholesome discipline for the foolish and froward—sagacious guidance for all. Of course, if a man or a community is unable to choose a guide of the right sort, then that man or community is doomed, and we need say no more of either. I keep warily out of the muddy conflict of politics; but I will say that the cries of certain apostles of liberty seem woful and foolish. Unhappy shriekers, whither do they fancy they are bound? Is it to some Land of Beulah, where they may gambol unrestrained on pleasant hills? The shriekers are all wrong, and the best friend of theirs, the best friend of humanity, is he who will teach them—sternly if need be—that liberty and license are two widely different things.

*August, 1888.*

### *EQUALITY.*

One of the strangest shocks which the British traveller can experience occurs to him when he makes his first acquaintance with the American servant—especially the male servant. The quiet domineering European is stung out of his impassivity by a sort of moral stab which disturbs every faculty, unless he is absolutely stunned and left gasping. In England, the quiet club servant waits with dignity and reserve, but he



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is obedient to the last degree, and his civility reaches the point of absolute polish. When he performs a service his air is impassive, but if he is addressed his face assumes a quietly good-humoured expression, and he contrives to make his temporary employer feel as though it was a pleasure to attend upon him. All over our country we find that politeness between employer and servant is mutual. Here and there we find a well-dressed ruffian who thinks he is doing a clever thing when he bullies a servant; but a gentleman is always considerate, quiet, respectful; and he expects consideration, quietness, and respect from those who wait upon him. The light-footed, cheerful young women who serve in hotels and private houses are nearly always charmingly kind and obliging without ever descending to familiarity; in fact, I believe that, if England be taken all round, it will be found that female post-office clerks are the only servants who are positively offensive. They are spoiled by the hurried, captious, tiresome persons who haunt post-offices at all hours, and in self-defence they are apt to convert themselves into moral analogues of the fretful porcupine. Perhaps the queenly dames in railway refreshment-rooms are almost equal to the post-office damsels; but both classes are growing more good-natured—thanks to Charles Dickens, Mr. Sullivan, and Mr. *Punch*.

But the American servant exhibits no such weakness as civility; he is resolved to let you know that you are in the country of equality, and, in order to do that effectually, he treats you as a grovelling inferior. You ask a civil question, and he flings his answer at you as he would fling a bone at a dog. Every act of service which he performs comes most ungraciously from him, and he usually contrives to let you plainly see two things—first, he is ashamed of his position; secondly, he means to take a sort of indirect revenge on you in order to salve his lacerated dignity. A young English peer happened to ask a Chicago servant to clean a pair of boots, and his tone of command was rather pronounced and definite. That young patrician began to doubt his own identity when he was thus addressed—“Ketch on and do them yourself!” There was no redress, no possible remedy, and finally our compatriot humbled himself to a negro, and paid an exorbitant price for his polish.

Here we have an absurdity quite fairly exposed. The young American student who acts as a reporter or waiter during his college vacation is nearly always a respectful gentleman who neither takes nor allows a liberty; but the underbred boor, keen as he is about his gratuities, will take even your gifts as though he were an Asiatic potentate, and the traveller a passing slave whose tribute is condescendingly received. In a word, the servant goes out of his way to prove that, in his own idea, he is quite fit to be anybody's master. The Declaration of Independence informs us that all men are born equal; the transatlantic servant takes that with a certain reservation, for he implies that, though men may be equal in a general way, yet, so far as he is concerned, he prefers to reckon himself the superior of anybody with whom business brings him into contact.



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It was in America that I first began to meditate on the problem of equality, and I have given it much thought at intervals during several years. The great difficulty is to avoid repeating stale commonplaces on the matter. The robust Briton bellows, "Equality! Divide up all the property in the world equally among the inhabitants, and there would be rich and poor, just as before, within a week!" The robust man thinks that settles the whole matter at once. Then we have the stock story of the three practical communists who forced themselves upon the society of Baron Rothschild, and explained their views at some length. The Baron said: "Gentlemen, I have made a little calculation, and I find that, if I divided my property equally among my fellow-citizens, your share would be one florin each. Oblige me by accepting that sum at once, and permit me to wish you good-morning." This was very neat in its way, but I want to talk just a little more seriously of a problem which concerns the daily life of us all, and affects our mental health, our placidity, and our self-respect very intimately. In the first place, we have to consider the deplorable exhibitions made by poor humanity whenever equality has been fairly insisted on in any community. The Frenchmen of 1792 thought that a great principle had been asserted when the President of the Convention said to the king, "You may sit down, Louis." It seemed fine to the gallery when the queenly Marie Antoinette was addressed as the widow Capet; but what a poor business it was after all! The howling familiarity of the mob never touched the real dignity of the royal woman, and their brutality was only a murderous form of Yankee servant's mean "independence." I cannot treat the subject at all without going into necessary subtleties which never occurred to an enraged mob or a bloodthirsty and insolent official; I cannot accept the bald jeers of a comfortable, purse-proud citizen as being of any weight, and I am just as loath to heed the wire-drawn platitudes of the average philosopher. If we accept the very first maxim of biology, and agree that no two individuals of any living species are exactly alike, we have a starting-point from which we can proceed to argue sensibly. We may pass over the countless millions of inequalities which we observe in the lower orders of living things: and there is no need to emphasize distinctions which are plain to every child. When we come to speak of the race of men we reach the only concern which has a passionate and vital interest for us; even the amazing researches and conclusions of the naturalists have no attraction for us unless they throw a light, no matter how oblique, on our mysterious being and our mysterious fate. The law which regulates the differentiation of species applies with especial significance when we consider the birth of human individuals; the law which ordains that out of countless millions of animalculae which once shed their remains on the



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floor of the deep sea, or that now swarm in any pond, there shall be no two alike, holds accurately for the myriads of men who are born and pass away. The type is the same; there are fixed resemblances, but exact similarity never. The struggle for existence, no matter what direction it may take, always ends in the singling out of individuals who, in some respect or other, are worthy to survive, while the weak perish and the elements of their bodies go to form new individuals. It soon becomes plain that the crazy cry for equality is really only a weak protest against the hardships of the battle for existence. The brutes have not attained to our complexity of brain; ideas are only rudimentary with them, and they decide the question of superiority by rude methods. Two lions fight until one is laid low; the lioness looks calmly on until the little problem of superiority is settled, and then she goes off with the victor. The horses on the Pampas have their set battles until one has asserted his mastery over the herd, and then the defeated ones cower away abjectly, and submit themselves meekly to their lord. All the male animals are given to issuing challenges in a very self-assertive manner, and the object is the same in every case. But we are far above the brutes; we have that mysterious, immaterial ally of the body, and our struggles are settled amid bewildering refinements and subtleties and restrictions. In one quarter, power of the soul gives its possessor dominion; in another, only the force of the body is of any avail. If we observe the struggles of savages, we see that the idea of equality never occurs to half-developed men; the chief is the strong man, and his authority can be maintained only by strength or by the influence that strength gives. As the brute dies out of man, the conditions of life's warfare become so complex that no one living could frame a generalization without finding himself at once faced by a million of exceptions that seem to negative his rule. Who was the most powerful man in England in Queen Anne's day? Marlborough was an unmatched fighter; Bolingbroke was an imaginative and masterful statesman; there were thousands of able and strong warriors; but the one who was the most respected and feared was that tiny cripple whose life was a long disease. Alexander Pope was as frail a creature as ever managed to support existence; he rarely had a moment free from pain; he was so crooked and aborted that a good-hearted woman like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was surprised into a sudden fit of laughter when he proposed marriage to her. Yet how he was feared! The only one who could match him was that raging giant who wrote "Gulliver," and the two men wielded an essential power greater than that of the First Minister. The terrible Atossa, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, shrank from contact with Pope, while for a long time the ablest men of the political sets approached Swift like lackeys. One power was made manifest by the waspish verse-maker and the powerful satirist, and each was acknowledged as a sort of monarch.



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It would be like playing at paradoxes if I went on to adduce many mysteries and contradictions that strike us when we consider man's dominion over man. We can only come to the same conclusion if we bring forward a million of instances; we can only see that the whole human race, individual by individual, are separated one from the other by differences more or less minute, and wherever two human beings are placed together one must inevitably begin to assert mastery over the other. The method of self-assertion may be that of the athlete, or that of the intriguer, or that of the clear-sighted over the purblind, or that of the subtle over the simple; it matters not, the effort for mastery may be made either roughly or gently, or subtly, or even clownishly, but made it will be.

Would it not be better to cease babbling of equality altogether, and to try to accept the laws of life with some submission? The mistake of rabid theorists lies in their supposition that the assertion of superiority by one person necessarily inflicts wrong on another, whereas it is only the mastery obtained by certain men over others that makes the life of the civilized human creature bearable. The very servant who is insolent while performing his duty only dares to exhibit rudeness because he is sure of protection by law. All men are equal before the law. Yes—but how was the recognition of equality enforced? Simply by the power of the strong. No monarch in the world would venture to deal out such measure to our rude servitor as was dealt by Clovis to one of his men. The king regarded himself as being affronted by his soldier, and he wiped out the affront to his own satisfaction by splitting his follower's head in twain. But the civilized man is secured by a bulwark of legality built up by strong hands, and manned, like the great Roman walls, by powerful legionaries of the law. In this law of England, if a peer and a peasant fight out a cause the peer has the advantage of the strength given by accumulated wealth—that is one example of our multifarious complexities; but the judge is stronger than either litigant, and it is the inequality personified by the judge that makes the safety of the peasant. In our ordered state, the strong have forced themselves into positions of power; they have decided that the coarseness of brutish conflict is not to be permitted, and one ruling agency is established which rests on force, and force alone, but which uses or permits the use of force only in cases of extremity. We know that the foundation of all law is martial law, or pure force; we know that when a judge says, "You shall be hanged," the convict feels resistance useless, for behind the ushers and warders and turnkeys there are the steel and bullet of the soldier. Thus it appears that even in the sanctuary of equality—in the law court—the life and efficiency of the place depend on the assertion of one superior strength—that is, on the assertion of inequality.



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If we choose to address each other as "Citizen," or play any fooleries of that kind, we make no difference. Citizen Jourdain may go out equipped in complete *carmagnole*, and he may refuse to doff his red cap to any dignitary breathing; but all the while Citizen Barras is wielding the real power, and Citizen Buonaparte is awaiting his turn in the background. All the swagger of equality will avail nothing when Citizen Buonaparte gets his chance; and the very men who talked loudest about the reign of equality are the most ready to bow down and worship the strong. Instead of ostentatiously proclaiming that one man is as good as another—and better, we should devote ourselves to finding out who are our real superiors. When the true man is found he will not stand upon petty forms; and no one will demand such punctilios of him. He will treat his brethren as beings to be aided and directed, he will use his strength and his wisdom as gifts for which he must render an account, and the trivialities of etiquette will count as nothing. When the street orator yells, "Who is our ruler? Is he not flesh and blood like us? Are not many of us above him?" he may possibly be stating truth. It would have been hard to find any street-lounger more despicable than Bomba or more foolish than poor Louis XVI; but the method of oratory is purely destructive, and it will be much more to the purpose if the street firebrand gives his audience some definite ideas as to the man who ought to be chosen as leader. If we have the faculty for recognizing our best man, all chatter about equalities and inequalities must soon drop into silence. When the ragged Suwarrow went about among his men and talked bluffly with the raw recruits, there was no question of equality in any squad, for the tattered, begrimed man had approved himself the wisest, most audacious, and most king-like of all the host; and he could afford to despise appearances. No soldier ventured to think of taking a liberty; every man revered the rough leader who could think and plan and dare. Frederick wandered among the camp-fires at night, and sat down with one group after another of his men. He never dreamed of equality, nor did the rude soldiers. The king was greatest; the men were his comrades, and all were bound to serve the Fatherland—the sovereign by offering sage guidance, the men by following to the death. No company of men ever yet did worthy work in the world when the notion of equality was tried in practice; and no kind of effort, for evil or for good, ever came to anything so long as those who tried did not recognize the rule of the strongest or wisest. Even the scoundrel buccaneers of the Spanish Main could not carry on their fiendish trade without sinking the notion of equality, and the simple Quakers, the Society of Friends, with all their straitened ideas, have been constantly compelled to recognize one head of their body, even though they gave him no distinctive title. Our business is to see that every man has his due as far as possible, and not more than his due. The superior must perceive what is the degree of deference which must be rendered to the inferior; the inferior must put away envy and covetousness, and must learn to bestow, without servility, reverence and obedience where reverence and obedience may be rightfully offered.



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*August, 1888.*

### *FRATERNITY.*

So far as we can see it appears plain that the wish for brotherhood was on the whole reasonable, and its fulfilment easier than the wild desire for liberty and equality. No doubt Omar and Cromwell and Hoche and Dumouriez have chosen in their respective times an odd mode of spreading the blessings of fraternity. It is a little harsh to say to a man, "Be my brother or I will cut your head off;" but we fear that men of the stamp of Mahomet, Cromwell, and the French Jacobins were given to offering a choice of the alternatives named. Perhaps we may be safe if we take the roughness of the mere proselytizers as an evidence of defective education; they had a dim perception of a beautiful principle, but they knew of no instrument with which they could carry conviction save the sword. We, with our better light, can well understand that brotherhood should be fostered among men; we are all children of one Father, and it is fitting that we should reverently acknowledge the universal family tie. The Founder of our religion was the earliest preacher of the divine gospel of pity, and it is to Him that we owe the loveliest and purest conception of brotherhood. He claimed to be the Brother of us all; He showed how we should treat our brethren, and He carried His teaching on to the very close of His life.

So far from talking puerilities about equality, we should all see that there are degrees in our vast family; the elder and stronger brethren are bound to succour the younger and weaker; the young must look up to their elders; and the Father of all will perhaps preserve peace among us if we only forget our petty selves and look to Him. Alas, it is so hard to forget self! The dullest of us can see how excellent and divine is brotherhood, if we do assuredly carry out the conception of fraternity thoroughly; but again I say, How hard it is to banish self and follow the teaching of our divine Brother! If we cast our eyes over the world now, we may see—perhaps indistinctly—things that might make us weep, were it not that we must needs smile at the childish ways of men. In the very nation that first chose to put forward the word "fraternity" as one of the symbols for which men might die we see a strange spectacle. Half that nation is brooding incessantly on revenge; half the nation is bent only on slaying certain brother human beings who happen to live on the north and east of a certain river instead of on the south and west. The home of the solacing doctrine of fraternity is also the home of incessant preparations for murder, rapine, bitter and brutal vengeance. About a million of men rise every morning and spend the whole day in practising so that they may learn to kill people cleverly; hideous instruments, which must cause devastation, torture, bereavement, and wreck, should they ever be used in earnest, are lovingly handled by men who hope to see blood flow before long. The Frenchman cannot yet venture



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to smite his Teutonic brother, but he will do so when he has the chance; and thus two bands of brethren, who might have dwelt together amicably, may shortly end by inflicting untold agonies on each other. Both nations which so savagely await the beginning of a mad struggle are supposed to be followers of the Brother whose sweet message is read and repeated by nearly all the men who live on our continent, yet they only utter bitter words and think sullen thoughts, while the more acrid of the two adversaries is the country which once inscribed "Brotherhood" on its very banners. All round the arena wherein the two great peoples defy each other the nations wait anxiously for the delivery of the first stroke that shall give the signal for wrath and woe; and, strangely, no one can tell which of the onlookers is the more fervent professor of our Master's faith. "Let brotherly love continue!"—that was the behest laid on us all; and we manifest our brotherly love by invoking the spirit of murder.

We know what exquisite visions floated around the twelve who first founded the Church on the principle of fraternity. No brother was to be left poor; all were to hold goods in common; every man should work for what he could, and receive what he needed; but evil crept in, and dissension and heart-burning, and ever since then the best of our poor besotted human race have been groping blindly after fraternity and finding it never. I always deprecate bitter or despondent views, or exaggerating the importance of our feeble race—for, after all, the whole time during which man has existed on earth is but as a brief swallow-flight compared with the abysmal stretches of eternity; but I confess that, when I see the flower of our race trained to become killers of men and awaiting the opportunity to exercise their murderous arts I feel a little sick at heart. Even they are compelled to hear the commands of the lovely gospel of fraternity, and, unless they die quickly in the fury of combat, their last moments are spent in listening to the same blessed words. It seems so mad and dreamlike that I have found myself thinking that, despite all our confidence, the world may be but a phantasmagoria, and ourselves, with our flesh that seems so solid, may be no more than fleeting wraiths. There is no one to rush between the scowling nations, as the poor hermit did between the gladiators in wicked Rome; there is no one to say, "Poor, silly peasant from pleasant France, why should you care to stab and torment that other poor flaxen-haired simpleton from Silesia? Your fields await you; if you were left to yourselves, then you and the Silesian would be brothers, worshipping like trusting children before the common Father of us all. And now you can find nothing better to do than to do each other to death!" Like the sanguine creatures who carried out the revolutionary movements of 1789, 1830, 1848, and 1860, the weak among us are apt to cry out—"Surely the time of fraternity



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has come at last!" Then, when the murderous Empire, or the equally murderous Republic, or the grim military despotism arrives instead of fraternity, the weak ones are smitten with confusion. I pity them, for a bitterness almost as of death must be lived through before one learns that God indeed doeth all things well. The poor Revolutionists thought that they must have rapid changes, and their hysterical visions appeared to them like perfectly wise and accurate glances into the future. They were in a hurry, forgetting that we cannot change our marvellous society on a sudden, any more than we can change a single tissue of our bodies on a sudden—hence their frantic hopes and frantic despair. If we gaze coolly round, we see that, in spite of a muttering, threatening France and a watchful Germany, in spite of the huge Russian storm-cloud that lowers heavily over Europe, in spite of the venomous intrigues with which Austria is accredited, there are still cheerful symptoms to be seen, and it may happen that the very horror of war may at last drive all men to reject it, and declare for fraternity. Look at that very France which is now so electric with passion and suspicion, and compare it with the France of long ago. The Gaul now thinks of killing the Teuton; but in the time of the good King Henry IV. he delighted in slaying his brother Gaul. The race who now only care to turn their hands against a rival nation once fought among themselves like starving rats in a pit. Even in the most polished society the men used to pick quarrels to fight to the death. In one year of King Henry's reign nine thousand French gentlemen were killed in duels! Bad as we are, we are not likely to return to such a state of things as then was seen. The men belonged to one nation, and they ought to have banded together so that no foreign foe might take advantage of them; and yet they chose rather to slaughter each other at the rate of nearly one hundred and ninety per week. Certainly, so far as France is concerned, we can see some improvement; for, although the cowardly and abominable practice of duelling is still kept up, only one man was killed during the past twelve months, instead of nine thousand. In England we have had nearly two hundred years of truce from civil wars; in Germany the sections of the populace have at any rate stopped fighting among themselves; in Italy there are no longer the shameful feuds of Guelf and Ghibelline. It would seem, then, that civil strife is passing away, and that countries which were once the prey of bloodthirsty contending factions are now at least peaceful within their own borders.



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If we reason from small things to great, we see that the squabbling nests of murderers, or would-be murderers, who peopled France, England, Germany, Austria, and Italy have given way to compact nations which enjoy unbroken internal peace. The struggles of business go on; the weak are trampled under foot in the mad rush of the cities of men, but the actual infliction of pain and death is not now dreamed of by Frenchman against Frenchman or German against German. We must remember that there never was so deadly and murderous a spirit displayed as during the Thirty Years' War, and yet the peoples who then wrestled and throttled each other are now peaceful under the same yoke. May we not trust that a time will come when nations will see on a sudden the blank folly of making war? Day by day the pressure of armaments is growing greater, and we may almost hope that the very fiendish nature of modern weapons may bring about a blessed *reductio ad absurdum*, and leave war as a thing ludicrous, and not to be contemplated by sane men! I find one gun specially advertised in our Christian country, and warranted to kill as many men in one minute as two companies of infantry could in five! What will be the effect of the general introduction of this delightful weapon? No force can possibly stand before it; no armour or works can keep out the hail of its bullets. Supposing, then, that benevolent science goes on improving the means of slaughter, must there not come a time when people will utterly refuse to continue the mad and miserable folly of war? Over the whole of Britain we may find even now the marks of cannon-shot discharged by Englishmen against the castles of other Englishmen. Is there one man in Britain who can at this present moment bring his imagination to conceive such an occurrence as an artillery fight between bodies of Englishmen? It is almost too absurd to be named even as a casual supposition. So far has fraternity spread. Now, if we go on perfecting dynamite shells which can destroy one thousand men by one explosion; if we increase the range of our guns from twelve miles to twenty, and fight our pieces according to directions signalled from a balloon, we shall be going the very best way to make all men rise with one spasm of disgust, and say, "No more of this!"

We cannot hope to do away with evil speaking, with verbal quarrelling, with mean grasping of benefits from less fortunate brethren. Alas, the reign of brotherhood will be long in eradicating the primeval combative instinct; but, when we compare the quiet urbanity of a modern gathering with the loud and senseless brawling which so often resulted from social assemblies even at the beginning of this century we may take some heart and hope on for the best. Our Lord had a clear vision of a time when bitterness and evil-doing should cease, and His words are more than a shadowy prediction. The fact is that, in striving gradually to introduce the third of the conditions of life craved



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by the poor feather-witted Frenchmen, the nations have a comparatively easy task. We cannot have equality, physical conditions having too much to do with giving the powers and accomplishments of men; we can only claim liberty under the supreme guidance of our Creator; but fraternity is quite a possible consummation. Our greatest hero held it as the Englishman's first duty to hate a Frenchman as he hated the Devil; now that mad and cankered feeling has passed away, and why should not the spread of common sense, common honesty, bring us at last to see that our fellow-man is better when regarded as a brother than as a possible assassin or thief?

Our corporate life and progress as nations, or even as a race of God's creatures, is much like the life and progress of the individual. The children of men stumble often, fall often, despair often, and yet the great universal movement goes on, and even the degeneracy which must always go on side by side with progress does not appreciably stay our advance. The individual man cannot walk even twenty steps without actually saving himself by a balancing movement from twenty falls. Every step tends to become an ignominious tumble, and yet our poor body may very easily move at the rate of four miles per hour, and we gain our destinations daily. The human race, in spite of many slips, will go on progressing towards good—that is, towards kindness—that is, towards fraternity—that is, towards the gospel, which at present seems so wildly and criminally neglected. The mild and innocent Anarcharsis Cloutz, who made his way over the continent of Europe, and who came to our little island, in his day always believed that the time for the federation of mankind would come. Poor fellow—he died under the murderous knife of the guillotine and did little to further his beautiful project! He was esteemed a harmless lunatic; yet, notwithstanding the twelve millions of armed men who trample Europe, I do not think that Cloutz was quite a lunatic after all. Moreover, all men know that right must prevail, and they know also that there is not a human being on earth who does not believe by intuition that the gospel of brotherhood is right, even as the life of its propounder was holy. The way is weary toward the quarter where the rays of dawn will first break over the shoulder of the earth. We walk on hoping, and, even if we fall by the way, and all our hopes seem to be tardy of fruition, yet others will hail the slow dawn of brotherhood when all now living are dead and still.

*September, 1888.*

### *LITTLE WARS.*

Just at this present our troops are engaged in fighting various savage tribes in various parts of the world, and the humorous journalist speaks of the affairs as "little wars." There is something rather gruesome in this airy flippancy proceeding from comfortable gentlemen who are in nice studies at home. The Burmese force fights, marches, toils in an atmosphere which would cause some of the airy



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critics to faint; the Thibetan force must do as much climbing as would satisfy the average Alpine performer; and all the soldiers carry their lives in their hands. What is a little war? Is any war little to a man who loses his life in it? I imagine that when a wounded fighter comes to face his last hour he regards the particular war in which he is engaged as quite the most momentous affair in the world so far as he is concerned. To me the whole spectacle of the little wars is most grave, both as regards the nation and as regards the individual Britons who must suffer and fall. Our destiny is heavy upon us; we must "dree our weirde," for we have begun walking on the road of conquest, and we must go forward or die. The man who has the wolf by the ears cannot let go his hold; we cannot slacken our grip on anything that once we have clutched. But it is terrible to see how we are bleeding at the extremities. I cannot give the figures detailing our losses in little wars during the past forty years, but they are far worse than we incurred in the world-shaking fight of Waterloo. Incessantly the drip, drip of national blood-shedding goes on, and no end seems to be gained, save the grim consciousness that we must suffer and never flinch. The graves of our best and dearest—our hardy loved ones—are scattered over the ends of the earth, and the little wars are answerable for all. England, in her blundering, half-articulate fashion, answers, "Yes, they had to die; their mother asked for their blood, and they gave it." So then from scores of punctures the life-blood of the mother of nations drops, and each new bloodshed leads to yet further bloodshed, until the deadly series looks endless. We sent Burnes to Cabul, and we betrayed him in the most dastardly way by the mouth of a Minister. England, the great mother, was not answerable for that most unholy of crimes; it was the talking men, the glib Parliament cowards. Burnes was cut to pieces and an army lost. Crime brings forth crime, and thus we had to butcher more Afghans. Every inch of India has been bought in the same way; one war wins territory which must be secured by another war, and thus the inexorable game is played on. In Africa we have fared in the same way, and thus from many veins the red stream is drained, and yet the proud heart of the mother continues to beat strongly. It is so hard for men to die; it is as hard for the Zulu and the Afghan and the Ghoorka as it is for the civilized man, and that is why I wish it were Britain's fortune to be allowed to cease from the shedding of blood. If the corpses of the barbarians whom we have destroyed within the past ten years could only be laid out in any open space and shown to our populace, there would be a shudder of horror felt through the country; yet, while the sweet bells chime to us about peace and goodwill, we go on sending myriads of men out of life, and the nation pays no more heed to that steady ruthless killing than it does to the slaughter of oxen. Alas!



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Then, if we think of the lot of those who fight for us and slaughter our hapless enemies by deputy as it were, their luck seems very hard. When the steady lines moved up the Alma slope and the men were dropping so fast, the soldiers knew that they were performing their parts as in a vast theatre; their country would learn the story of their deed, and the feats of individuals would be amply recorded. But, when a man spends months in a far-off rocky country, fighting day after day, watching night after night, and knowing that at any moment the bullet of a prowling Ghilzai or Afridi may strike him, he has very little consolation indeed. When one comes to think of the matter from the humorous point of view—though there is more grim fact than fun in it—it does seem odd that we should be compelled to spend two thousand pounds on an officer's education, and then send him where he may be wiped out of the world in an instant by a savage little above the level of the Bushman. I pity the poor savages, but I certainly pity the refined and highly-trained English soldier more. The latest and most delightful of our Anglo-Indians has put the matter admirably in verse which carries a sting even amidst its pathos. He calls his verses "Arithmetic on the Frontier."

A great and glorious thing it is  
To learn for seven years or so  
The Lord knows what of that or this,  
Ere reckoned fit to face the foe,  
The flying bullet down the pass,  
That whistles clear, "All flesh is grass."

Three hundred pounds per annum spent  
On making brain and body meeter  
For all the murderous intent  
Comprised in villainous saltpetre!  
And after—ask the Yusufzaies  
What comes of all our 'ologies.

A scrimmage in a border station,  
A canter down some dark defile—  
Two thousand pounds of education  
Drops to a ten-rupee jezail!  
The crammer's boast, the squadron's pride  
Shot like a rabbit in a ride.

No proposition Euclid wrote,  
No formulae the text-book know,  
Will turn the bullet from your coat  
Or ward the tulwar's downward blow;  
Strike hard who cares—shoot straight who can—  
The odds are on the cheaper man.



One sword-knot stolen from the camp  
Will pay for all the school expenses  
Of any Kurrum Valley scamp  
Who knows no word of moods and tenses,  
But, being blessed with perfect sight,  
Picks off our messmates left and right.

With home-bred hordes the hillsides teem;  
The troop-ships bring us one by one,  
At vast expense of time and steam,  
To slay Afridis where they run.  
The captives of our bow and spear  
Are cheap, alas, as we are dear!



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There is a world of meaning in those half-sad, half-smiling lines, and many an hour-long discourse might fail to throw more lurid light on one of the strangest historical problems in the world. The flower of England's manhood must needs go; and our most brilliant scholars, our boldest riders, our most perfect specimens of physical humanity drop like rabbits to the fire of half-naked savages! The bright boy, the hero of school and college, the brisk, active officer, passes away into obscurity. The mother weeps—perhaps some one nearer and dearer than all is stricken: but the dead Englishman's name vanishes from memory like a fleck of haze on the side of the valley where he sleeps. England—cold, inexorable, indifferent—has other sons to take the dead man's place and perhaps share his obscurity; and the doomed host of fair gallant youths moves forward ever in serried, fearless lines towards the shadows. That is what it costs to be a mighty nation. It is sorrowful to think of the sacrificed men—sacrificed to fulfil England's imposing destiny; it is sorrowful to think of the mourners who cannot even see their darling's grave; yet there is something grandiose and almost morbidly impressive in the attitude of Britain. She waves her imperial hand and says, "See what my place in the world is! My bravest, my most skilful, may die in a fight that is no more than a scuffling brawl; they go down to the dust of death unknown, but the others come on unflinching. It is hard that I should part with my precious sons in mean warfare, but the fates will have it so, and I am equal to the call of fate." Thus the sovereign nation. Those who have no very pompous notions are willing to recognize the savage grandeur of our advance; but I cannot help thinking of the lonely graves, the rich lives squandered, the reckless casting away of human life, which are involved in carrying out our mysterious mission in the great peninsula. Our graves are spread thickly over the deadly plains; our brightest and best toil and suffer and die, and they have hardly so much as a stone to mark their sleeping-place; our blood has watered those awful stretches from the Himalayas to Comorin, and we may call Hindostan the graveyard of Britain's noblest. People who see only the grizzled veterans who lounge away their days at Cheltenham or Brighton think that the fighting trade must be a very nice one after all. To retire at fifty with a thousand a year is very pleasant no doubt; but then every one of those war-worn gentlemen who returns to take his ease represents a score who have perished in fights as undignified as a street brawl. "More legions!" said Varus; "More legions!" says England; and our regiments depart without any man thinking of *Morituri te salittant!* Yes; that phrase might well be in the mind of every British man who fares down the Red Sea and enters the Indian furnace. Those about to die, salute thee, O England, our mother! Is it worth while? Sometimes I have my doubts.



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Moreover, I never talk with one of our impassive, masterful Anglo-Indians without feeling sorry that their splendid capacities should be so often cast into darkness, and their fame confined to the gossip of a clump of bungalows. Verily our little wars use up an immense quantity of raw material in the shape of intellect and power. A man whose culture is far beyond that of the mouthing politicians at home and whose statesmanship is not to be compared to the ignorant crudities of the pigmies who strut and fret on the English party stage—this man spends great part of a lifetime in ruling and fighting; he gives every force of a great intellect and will to his labours, and he achieves definite and beneficent practical results; yet his name is never mentioned in England, and any vulgar vestryman would probably outweigh him in the eyes of the populace. Carlyle says that we should despise fame. “Do your work,” observes the sage, “and never mind the rest. When your duty is done, no further concern rests with you.” And then the aged thinker goes on to snarl at puny creatures who are not content to be unknown. Well, that is all very stoical and very grand, and so forth; but Carlyle forgot human nature. He himself raged and gnashed his teeth because the world neglected him, and I must with every humility ask forgiveness of his *manes* if I express some commiseration for the unknown braves who perish in our little wars. Our callousness as individuals can hardly be called lordly, though the results are majestic; we accept supreme services, and we accept the supreme sacrifice (Skin for skin: all that a man hath will he give for his life), and we very rarely think fit to growl forth a chance word of thanks. Luckily our splendid men are not very importunate, and most of them accept with silent humour the neglect which befalls them. An old fighting general once remarked, “These fellows are in luck since the telegraph and the correspondents have been at work. We weren’t so fortunate in my day. I went through the Crimea and the Mutiny, and there was yet another affair in 1863 that was hotter than either, so far as close fighting and proportional losses of troops were concerned. A force of three thousand was sent against the Afghans, and they never gave us much rest night or day. They seemed determined to give their lives away, and they wouldn’t be denied. I’ve seen them come on and grab at the muzzles of the rifles. We did a lot of fighting behind rough breastworks, but sometimes they would rush us then. We lost thirty officers out of thirty-four before we were finished. Well, when I came home and went about among the clubs, the fellows used to say to me, ‘What was this affair of yours up in the hills? We had no particulars except the fact that you were fighting.’ And that expedition cost ten times as many men as your Egyptian one, besides causing six weeks of almost constant fighting; yet not a newspaper had a word to say about it! We never grumbled much—it was all in the day’s work; but it shows how men’s luck varies.”



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There spoke the old fighter, "Duty first, and take your chance of the rest." True; but could not one almost wish that those forlorn heroes who saved our frontier from savage hordes might have gained just a little of that praise so dear to the frivolous mind of man? It was not to be; the dead men's bones have long ago sunk into the kindly earth, the wind flows down the valleys, and the fighters sleep in the unknown glens and on far-distant hillsides with no record save the curt clerk's mark in the regimental list—"Dead."

When I hear the merry pressman chatting about little wars and proudly looking down on "mere skirmishes," I cannot restrain a movement of impatience. Are our few dead not to be considered because they were few? Supposing they had swarmed forward in some great battle of the West and died with thousands of others amid the hurricane music of hundreds of guns, would the magnitude of the battle make any difference?

Honour to those who risk life and limb for England; honour to them, whether they die amid loud battle or in the far-away dimness of a little war!

*September, 1888.*

### *THE BRITISH FESTIVAL.*

Again and again I have talked about the delights of leisure, and I always advise worn worldlings to renew their youth and gain fresh ideas amid the blessed calm of the fields and the trees. But I lately watched an immense procession of holiday-makers travelling mile after mile in long-drawn sequence—and the study caused me to have many thoughts. There was no mistake about the intentions of the vast mob. They started with a steadfast resolution to be jolly—and they kept to their resolution so long as they were coherent of mind. It was a strange sight—a population probably equal to half that of Scotland all plunged into a sort of delirium and nearly all forgetting the serious side of life. As I gazed on the frantic assembly, I wondered how the English ever came to be considered a grave solid nation; I wondered, moreover, how a great percentage of men representing a nation of conquerors, explorers, administrators, inventors, should on a sudden decide to go mad for a day. Perhaps, after all, the catchword "Merry England" meant really "Mad England"; perhaps the good days which men mourned for after the grim shade of Puritanism came over the country were neither more nor less than periods of wild orgies; perhaps we have reason to be thankful that the national carnivals do not now occur very often. Our ancestors had a very peculiar idea of what constituted a merry-making, and there are many things in ancient art and literature which tempt us to fancy that a certain crudity distinguished the festivals of ancient days; but still the latter-day frolic in all its monstrous proportions is not to be studied by a philosophic observer without profoundly moving thoughts arising. As I gazed on the endless flow of travellers, I could hardly help wondering how the mob would conduct themselves during any great



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social convulsion. Some gushing persons talk about the good humour and orderliness of the British crowd. Well, I allow that the better class of holiday-makers exhibit a kind of rough good nature; but, whenever "sport" is in question, we find that a certain class come to the front—a class who are not genial or merry, but purely lawless. While the huge carnival is in progress during one delirious day, we have a chance of seeing in a mild form what would happen if a complete national disaster caused society to become fundamentally disordered. The beasts of prey come forth from their lairs, the most elementary rules of conduct are forgotten or bluntly disregarded, and the law-abiding citizen may see robbery and violence carried on in broad daylight. In some cases it happens that organized bands of thieves rob one man after another with a brutal effrontery which quite shames the minor abilities of Macedonian or Calabrian brigands. Forty or fifty consummate scoundrels work in concert; and it often happens that even the betting-men are seized, raised from the ground, and shaken until their money falls and is scrambled for by eager rascaldom. Wherever there is sport the predatory animals flock together; and I thought, when last I saw the crew, "If a foreign army were in movement against England and a panic arose, there would be little mercy for quiet citizens." On a hasty computation, I should say that an ordinary Derby Day brings together an army of wastrels and criminals strong enough to sack London if once the initial impetus were given; and who can say what blind chance may supply that impetus even in our day? There is not so much sheer foulness nowadays as there used to be; the Yahoo element—male and female—is not obtrusive; and it is even possible for a lady to remain in certain quarters of the mighty Downs without being offended in any way. Our grandfathers—and our fathers, for that matter—had a somewhat acrid conception of humour, and the offscourings of the city ministered to this peculiar humorous sense in a singular way. But a leaven of propriety has now crept in, and the evil beings who were wont to pollute the sweet air preserve some moderate measure of seemliness. I am willing to welcome every sign of improving manners; and yet I must say that the great British Festival is a sorry and even horrible spectacle. What is the net result or purpose of the whole display? Cheery scribes babble about "Isthmian games" and the glorious air of the Surrey hills, and they try to put on a sort of jollity and semblance of well-being; but the sham is a poor one, and the laughing hypocrites know in their hearts that the vast gathering of people means merely waste, idleness, thievery, villainy, vice of all kinds—and there is next to no compensation for the horrors which are crowded together. I would fain pick out anything good from the whole wild spectacle; but I cannot, and so give up the attempt with a sort of sick despair. There is something



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rather pleasant in the sight of a merry lad who attends his first Derby, for he sees only the vivid rush and movement of crowds; but to a seasoned observer and thinker the tremendous panorama gives suggestions only of evil. I hardly have patience to consider the fulsome talk of the writers who print insincerities by the column year by year. They know that the business is evil, and yet they persist in speaking as if there were some magic influence in the reeking crowd which, they declare, gives health and tone to body and mind. The dawdling parties who lunch on the Hill derive no particular harm; but then how they waste money and time! Plunderers of all sorts flourish in a species of blind whirl of knavery; but no worthy person derives any good from the cruel waste of money and strength and energy. The writers know all this, and yet they go on turning out their sham cordiality, sham congratulations, sham justifications; while any of us who know thoroughly the misery and mental death and ruin of souls brought on by racing and gambling are labelled as un-English or churlish or something of the kind. Why should we be called churlish? Is it not true that a million of men and women waste a day on a pursuit which brings them into contact with filthy intemperance, stupid debauch, unspeakable coarseness? The eruptive sportsman tells us that the sight of a good man on a good horse should stir every manly impulse in a Briton. What rubbish! What manliness can there be in watching a poor baby-colt flogged along by a dwarf? If one is placed at some distance from the course, then one may find the glitter of the pretty silk jackets pleasing; but, should one chance to be near enough to see what is termed "an exciting finish," one's general conception of the manliness of racing may be modified. From afar off the movement of the jockeys' whip-hands is no more suggestive than the movement of a windmill's sails; but, when one hears the "flack, flack" of the whalebone and sees the wales rise on the dainty skin of the immature horse, one does not feel quite joyous or manly. I have seen a long lean creature reach back with his right leg and keep on jobbing with the spur for nearly four hundred yards of a swift finish; I saw another manikin lash a good horse until the animal fairly curved its back in agony and writhed its head on one side so violently that the manly sporting-men called it an ungenerous brute. Where does the fun come in for the onlookers? There is one good old thoroughbred which remembers a fearful flogging that he received twenty-two years ago; if he hears the voice of the man who lashed him, he sweats profusely, and trembles so much that he is like to fall down. How is the breed of horses directly improved by that kind of sport? No; the thousands of wastrels who squander the day and render themselves unsettled and idle for a week are not thinking of horses or of taking a healthy outing; they are obeying an unhealthy gregarious instinct which in certain circumstances



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makes men show clear signs of acute mania. If we look at the unadulterated absurdity of the affair, we may almost be tempted to rage like Carlyle or Swift. For weeks there are millions of people who talk of little else save the doings of useless dumb animals which can perform no work in the world and which at best are beautiful toys. When the thoroughbreds actually engage in their contest, there is no man of all the imposing multitude who can see them gallop for more than about thirty seconds; the last rush home is seen only by the interesting mortals who are on the great stand; and the entire performance which interests some persons for a year is all over in less than three minutes. This is the game on which Englishmen lavish wild hopes, keen attention, and good money—this is the sport of kings which gluts the pockets of greedy knaves! A vast city—nay, a vast empire—is partially disorganized for a day in order that some dwarfish boys may be seen flogging immature horses during a certain number of seconds, and we learn that there is something “English,” and even chivalrous, in the foolish wastrel proceedings.

My conceptions of English virtues are probably rudimentary; but I quite fail to discover where the “nobility” of horse-racing and racecourse picnicing appears. My notion of “nobility” belongs to a bygone time; and I was gratified by hearing of one very noble deed at the moment when the flashy howling mob were trooping forward to that great debauch which takes place around the Derby racecourse. A great steamer was flying over a Southern sea, and the sharks were showing their fins and prowling around with evil eyes. The *Rimutaka* spun on her way, and all the ship’s company were cheerful and careless. Suddenly a poor crazy woman sprang over the side and was drifted away by a surface-current; while the irresistible rush of the steamer could not of course be easily stayed. A good Englishman—honour for ever to his name!—jumped into the water, swam a quarter of a mile, and, by heaven’s grace, escaped the wicked sea-tigers and saved the unhappy distraught woman. That man’s name is Cavell: and I think of “nobility” in connection with him, and not in connection with the manikins who rush over Epsom Downs.

I like to give a thought to the nobility of those men who guard and rule a mighty empire; but I think very little of the creatures who merely consume food and remain at home in rascally security. What a farce to talk of encouraging “athletics”! The poor manikin who gets up on a racer is not an athlete in any rational sense of the term. He is a wiry emaciated being whose little muscles are strung like whipcord; but it is strange to dignify him as an athlete. If he once rises above nine stone in weight, his life becomes a sort of martyrdom; but, abstemious and self-contained as he is, we can hardly give him the name which means so much to all healthy Englishmen. For some time each day the wondrous specimen of manhood must stew in a Turkish



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bath or between blankets; he tramps for miles daily if his feet keep sound; he starts at five in the morning and perhaps rides a trial or two; then he takes his weak tea and toast, then exercise or sweating; then comes his stinted meal; and then he starves until night. To call such a famished lean fellow a follower of “noble” sport is too much. Other British men deny themselves; but then think of the circumstances! Far away among the sea of mountains on our Indian frontier a gallant Englishman remains in charge of his lonely station; his Pathans or Ghoorkas are fine fellows, and perhaps some brave old warrior will use the privilege of age and stroll in to chat respectfully to the Sahib. But it is all lonely—drearily lonely. The mountain partridge may churr at sunrise and sundown; the wily crows may play out their odd life-drama daily; the mountain winds may rush roaring through the gullies until the village women say they can hear the hoofs of the brigadier’s horse. But what are these desert sounds and sights for the laboriously-cultured officer? His nearest comrade is miles off; his spirit must dwell alone. And yet such men hang on at their dreary toil; and who can ever hear them complain, save in their semi-humorous letters to friends at home? They often carry their lives in their hands; but they can only hope to rest unknown if the chance goes against them. I call those men noble. There are no excited thousands for them to figure before; they scarcely have the honour of mention in a despatch; but they go on in grim silence, working out their own destiny and the destiny of this colossal empire. When I compare them with the bold sportsmen, I feel something like disgust. The real high-hearted heroes do not crave rewards—if they did, they would reap very little. The bold man who risked everything to save the *Calliope* will never earn as much in a year as a horse-riding manikin can in two months. That is the way we encourage our finest merit. And meantime at the “Isthmian games” the hordes of scoundrelism who dwell at ease can enjoy themselves to their hearts’ content in their own dreadful way; they break out in their usual riot of foulness; they degrade the shape of man; and the burly moralists look on robustly, and say that it is good.

I never think of the great British carnival without feeling that the dregs of that ugly crowd will one day make history in a fashion which will set the world shuddering. I have no pity for ruined gamblers; but I am indignant when we see the worst of human kind luxuriating in abominable idleness and luxury on the foul fringe of the hateful racecourse. No sumptuary law will ever make any inroad on the cruel evil; and my feeling is one of sombre hopelessness.

*July, 1889.*

*SEASONABLE NONSENSE.*



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The most hard-hearted of cynics must pity the poor daily journalist who is calmly requested nowadays to produce a Christmas article. For my own part I decline to meddle with holly and jollity and general goodwill, and I have again and again protested against the insane Beggars' Carnival which breaks out yearly towards the beginning of December. A man may be pleased enough to hear his neighbour express goodwill, but he does not want his neighbour's hand held forth to grasp our Western equivalent for "backsheesh." In Egypt the screeching Arabs make life miserable with their ceaseless dismal yell, "*Backsheesh, Howaji!*" The average British citizen is also hailed with importunate cries which are none the less piercing and annoying from the fact that they are translated into black and white. The ignoble frivolity of the swarming circulars, the obvious insincerity of the newspaper appeals, the house-to-house calls, tend steadily to vulgarize an ancient and a beautiful institution, and alienate the hearts of kindly people who do not happen to be abject simpletons. The outbreak of kindness is sometimes genuine on the part of the donors; but it is often merely surface-kindness, and the gifts are bestowed in a bitter and grudging spirit. Let me ask, What are the real feelings of a householder who is requested to hand out a present to a turncock or dustman whom he has never seen? The functionaries receive fair wages for unskilled labour, yet they come smirking cheerfully forward and prefer a claim which has no shadow of justification. If a flower-seller is rather too importunate in offering her wares, she is promptly imprisoned for seven days or fined; if a costermonger halts for a few minutes in a thoroughfare and cries his goods, his stock maybe confiscated; yet the privileged Christmas mendicant may actually proceed to insolence if his claims are ignored; and the meek Briton submits to the insult. I cannot sufficiently deplore the progress of this spirit of beggardom, for it is acting and reacting in every direction all over the country. Long ago we lamented the decay of manly independence among the fishermen of those East Coast ports which have become watering-places. Big bearded fellows whose fathers would have stared indignantly at the offer of a gratuity are ready to hold out their hands and touch their caps to the most vulgar dandy that ever swaggered. To any one who knew and loved the whole breed of seamen and fishermen, a walk along Yarmouth sands in September is among the most purely depressing experiences in life. But the demoralization of the seaside population is not so distressing as that of the general population in great cities. We all know Adam Bede—the very finest portrait of the old-fashioned workman ever done. If George Eliot had represented Adam as touching his cap for a sixpence, we should have gasped with surprise at the incongruity. Can we imagine an old-world stonemason like Hugh Miller begging coppers from a farmer on whose steading he happened to be employed? The thing is preposterous! But now a strong London artizan will coolly ask for his gratuity just as if he were a mere link-boy!



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It is pleasant to turn to kindlier themes; it is pleasant to think of the legitimate rejoicings and kindnesses in which the most staid of us may indulge. Far be it from me to emulate the crabbed person who proposed to form a "Society for the Abolition of Christmas." The event to be commemorated is by far the greatest in the history of our planet; all others become hardly worthy of mention when we think of it; and nothing more momentous can happen until the last catastrophe, when a chilled and tideless earth shall roll through space, and when no memory shall remain of the petty creatures who for a brief moment disturbed its surface. The might of the Empire of Rome brooded over the fairest portions of the known world, and it seemed as though nothing could shake that colossal power; the pettiest officer of the Imperial staff was of more importance than all the natives of Syria; and yet we see that the fabric of Roman rule has passed away like a vision, while the faith taught by a band of poor Syrian men has mastered the minds of the strongest nations in the world. The poor disciples whom the Master left became apostles; footsore and weary they wandered—they were scorned and imprisoned and tortured until the last man of them had passed away. Their work has subdued princes and empires, and the bells that ring out on Christmas Eve remind us not only of the most tremendous occurrence in history, but of the deeds of a few humble souls who conquered the fear of death and who resigned the world in order that the children of the world might be made better. A tremendous Event truly! We are far, far away from the ideal, it is true; and some of us may feel a thrill of sick despair when we think of what the sects have done and what they have not done—it all seems so slow, so hopeless, and the powers of evil assert themselves ever and again with such hideous force. Some withdraw themselves to fierce isolation; some remain in the world, mocking the ways of men and treating all life as an ugly jest; some refuse to think at all, and drag themselves into oblivion; while some take one frantic sudden step and leave the world altogether by help of bullet or bare bodkin. A man of light mind who endeavoured to reconcile all the things suggested to him by the coming of Christmas would probably become demented if he bent his entire intellect to solve the puzzles. Thousands—millions—of books have been written about the Christian theology, and half of European mankind cannot claim to have any fixed and certain belief which leads to right conduct. Some of the noblest and sweetest souls on earth have given way to chill hopelessness, and only a very bold or a very thick-sighted man could blame them; we must be tender towards all who are perplexed, especially when we see how terrible are the reasons for perplexity. Nevertheless, dark as the outlook may be in many directions, men are slowly coming to see that the service of God is the destruction of enmity, and that the religion of tenderness and pity alone can give happiness during our dark pilgrimage.



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Far back in last winter a man was forcing his way across a dreary marsh in the very teeth of a wind that seemed to catch his throat in an icy grip, stopping the breath at intervals and chilling the very heart. Coldly the grey breakers rolled under the hard lowering sky; coldly the western light flickered on the iron slopes of far-off hills; coldly the last beams struck on the water and made chance wavelets flash with a terrible glitter. The night rushed down, and the snow descended fiercely; the terrified cattle tried to find shelter from the scourge of the storm; a hollow roar rang sullenly amid the darkness; stray sea-birds far overhead called weirdly, and it seemed as if the spirit of evil were abroad in the night. In darkness the man fought onward, thinking of the unhappy wretches who sometimes lie down on the snow and let the final numbness seize their hearts. Then came a friendly shout—then lights—and then the glow of warmth that filled a broad room with pleasantness. All the night long the mad gusts tore at the walls and made them vibrate; all night the terrible music rose into shrieks and died away in low moaning, and ever the savage boom of the waves made a vast under-song. Then came visions of the mournful sea that we all know so well, and the traveller thought of the honest fellows who must spend their Christmas-time amid warring forces that make the works of man seem puny. What a picture that is—The Toilers of the Sea in Winter! Christmas Eve comes with no joyous jangling of bells; the sun stoops to the sea, glaring lividly through whirls of snow, and the vessel roars through the water; black billows rush on until their crests topple into ruin, and then the boiling white water shines fitfully like some strange lambent flame; the breeze sings hoarsely among the cordage; the whole surface flood plunges on as if some immense cataract must soon appear after the rapids are passed. Every sea that the vessel shatters sends up a flying waterspout; and the frost acts with amazing suddenness, so that the spars, the rigging, and the deck gather layer after layer of ice. Supposing the vessel is employed in fishing, then the men in the fore-castle crouch round the little fire, or shiver on their soaked beds, and perhaps growl out a few words of more or less cheerful talk. Stay with the helmsman, and you may know what the mystery and horror of utter gloom are really like. There is danger everywhere—a sudden wave may burst the deck or heave the vessel down on her side; a huge dim cloud may start shapelessly from the murk, and, before a word of warning can be uttered, a great ship may crash into the labouring craft. In that case hope is gone, for the boat is bedded in a mass of ice and all the doomed seamen must take the deadly plunge to eternity. Ah, think of this, you who rest in the glow of beautiful homes! Then the morning—the grey desolation! No words can fairly picture the utter cheerlessness of a wintry dawn at sea. The bravest of men feel



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something like depression or are pursued by cruel apprehensions. The solid masses of ice have gripped every block, and the ropes will not run; the gaunt masts stand up like pallid ghosts in the grey light, and still the volleys of snow descend at intervals. All the ships seem to be cowering away, scared and beaten; even the staunch sea-gulls have taken refuge in fields and quiet rivers; and only the seamen have no escape. The mournful red stretches of the Asiatic deserts are wild enough, but there are warmth and marvellous light, and those who well know the moaning wastes say that their fascination sinks on the soul. The wintry sea has no fascination—no consolation; it is hungry, inhospitable—sometimes horrible. But even there Christ walks the waters in spirit. In an ordinary vessel the rudest seaman is made to think of the great day, and, even if he goes on grumbling and swearing on the morrow, he is apt to be softened and slightly subdued for one day at least. The fishermen on the wild North Sea are cared for, and merry scenes are to be witnessed even when landsmen might shudder in terror. Certain gallant craft, like strong yachts, glide about among the plunging smacks; each of the yachts has a brave blue flag at the masthead, and the vessels are laden with kindly tokens from thousands of gentle souls on shore. Surely there is no irreverence in saying that the Master walks the waters to this day?

We Britons must of course express some of our emotions by eating and drinking freely. No political party can pretend to adjust the affairs of the Empire until the best-advertised members have met together at a dinner-table; no prominent man can be regarded as having achieved the highest work in politics, or art, or literature, or histrionics, until he has been delicately fed in company with a large number of brother mortals; and no anniversary can possibly be celebrated without an immense consumption of eatables and drinkables. The rough men of the North Sea have the national instinct, and their mode of recognizing the festive season is quite up to the national standard. The North Sea fisherman would not nowadays approve of the punch-bowls and ancient ale which Dickens loved so much to praise, for he is given to the most severe forms of abstinence; but it is a noble sight when he proceeds to show what he can do in the way of Christmas dining. If he is one of the sharers in a parcel from on shore, he is fortunate, for he may possibly partake of a pudding which might be thrown over the masthead without remaining whole after its fall on deck; but it matters little if he has no daintily-prepared provender. Jack Fisherman seats himself on a box or on the floor of the cabin; he produces his clasp-knife and prepares for action. When his huge tin dish is piled with a miscellaneous assortment of edibles, it presents a spectacle which might make all Bath and Matlock and Royat and Homburg shudder; but the seaman, despising the miserable luxuries of fork and spoon, attacks



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the amazing conglomeration with enthusiasm. His Christmas pudding may resemble any geological formation that you like to name, and it may be unaccountably allied with a perplexing maze of cabbage and potatoes—nothing matters. Christmas must be kept up, and the vast lurches of the vessel from sea to sea do not at all disturb the fine equanimity of the fellows who are bent on solemnly testifying, by gastronomic evidence, to the loyalty with which Christmas is celebrated among orthodox Englishmen. The poor lads toil hard, live hard, and they certainly feed hard; but, with all due respect, it must be said also that they mostly pray hard; and, if any one of the cynical division had been among the seamen during that awful time five years ago, he would have seen that among the sea-toilers at least the “glad” season is glad in something more than name—for the gladness is serious. Sights of the same kind may be seen on great ships that are careering over the myriad waterways that net the surface of the globe; the smart man-of-war, the great liner, the slow deep-laden barque toiling wearily round the Horn, are all manned by crews that keep up the aged tradition more or less merrily; and woe betide the cook that fails in his duty! That lost man’s fate may be left to the eye of imagination. Under the Southern Cross the fair summer weather glows; but the good Colonists have their little rejoicings without the orthodox adjuncts of snow and frozen fingers and iron roads. Far up in the bush the men remember to make some kind of rude attempt at improvising Christmas rites, and memories of the old country are present with many a good fellow who is facing his first hard luck. But the climate makes no difference; and, apart from all religious considerations, there is no social event that so draws together the sympathies of the whole English race all over the world.

At Nainee Tal, or any other of our stations in our wondrous Indian possession, the day is kept. Alas, how dreary it is for the hearts that are craving for home! The moon rises through the majestic arch of the sky and makes the tamarisk-trees gorgeous; the warm air flows gently; the dancers float round to the wild waltz-rhythm; and the imitation of home is kept up with zeal by the stout general, the grave and scholarly judge, the fresh subaltern, and by all the bright ladies who are in exile. But even these think of the quiet churches in sweet English places; they think of the purple hedges, the sharp scent of frost-bitten fields, the glossy black ice, and the hissing ring of the skates. I know that, religiously as Christmas is kept up even on the frontier in India, the toughest of the men long for home, and pray for the time when the blessed regions of Brighton and Torquay and Cheltenham may receive the worn pensioner. One poet says something of the Anglo-Indian’s longing for home at Christmas-time; he speaks with melancholy of the folly of those who sell their brains for rupees and go into exile, and he appears to be



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ready, for his own part, to give up his share in the glory of our Empire if only he can see the friendly fields in chill December. I sympathize with him. Away with the mendicants, rich and poor—away with the gushing parasites who use a kindly instinct and a sacred name in order to make mean profit—away with the sordid hucksters who play with the era of man's hope as though the very name of the blessed time were a catchword to be used like the abominable party-cries of politicians! But when I come to men and women who understand the real significance of the day—when I come to charitable souls who are reminded of One who was all Charity, and who gave an impulse to the world which two thousand years have only strengthened—when I come among these, I say, “Give us as much Yule-tide talk as ever you please, do your deeds of kindness, take your fill of innocent merriment, and deliver us from the pestilence of quacks and mendicants!” It is when I think of the ghastly horror of our own great central cities that I feel at once the praiseworthiness and the hopelessness of all attempts to succour effectually the immense mass of those who need charity. Hopeless, helpless lives are lived by human creatures who are not much above the brutes. Alas, how much may be learned from a journey through the Midlands! We may talk of merry frosty days and starlit nights and unsullied snow and Christmas cheer; but the potter and the iron-worker know as much about cheeriness as they do about stainless snow. Then there is London to be remembered. A cheery time there will be for the poor creatures who hang about the dock-gates and fight for the chance of earning the price of a meal! In that blank world of hunger and cold and enforced idleness there is nothing that the gayest optimist could describe as joyful, and some of us will have to face the sight of it during the winter that is now at hand. What can be done? Hope seems to have deserted many of our bravest; we hear the dark note of despair all round, and it is only the sight of the workers—the kindly workers—that enables us to bear up against deadly depression and dark pessimism.

*December, 1888.*

### *THE FADING YEAR.*

Even in this distressed England of ours there are still districts where the simple reapers regard the harvest labour as a frolic; the dulness of their still lives is relieved by a burst of genuine but coarse merriment, and their abandoned glee is not unpleasant to look upon. Then come the harvest suppers—noble spectacles. The steady champ of resolute jaws sounds in a rhythm which is almost majestic; the fearsome destruction wrought on solid joints would rouse the helpless envy of the dyspeptics of Pall Mall, and the playful consumption of ale—no small beer, but golden Rodney—might draw forth an ode from a teetotal Chancellor of the Exchequer. August winds up in a blaze of gladness for the reaper. On ordinary evenings he sits stolidly in the dingy



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parlour and consumes mysterious malt liquor to an accompaniment of grumbling and solemn puffing of acrid tobacco, but the harvest supper is a wildly luxurious affair which lasts until eleven o'clock. Are there not songs too? The village tenor explains—with a powerful accent—that he only desires Providence to let him like a soldier fall. Of course he breaks down, but there is no adverse criticism. Friendly hearers say, "Do yowe try back, Willum, and catch that up at start agin;" and Willum does try back in the most excruciating manner. Then the elders compare the artist with singers of bygone days, and a grunting chorus of stories goes on. Then comes the inevitable poaching song. Probably the singer has been in prison a dozen times over, but he is regarded as a moral and law-abiding character by his peers; and even his wife, who suffered during his occasional periods of seclusion, smiles as he drones out the jolting chorus. When the sportsman reaches the climax and tells how—

We slung her on our shoulders,  
And went across the down;  
We took her to a neighbour's house,  
And sold her for a crown.

We sold her for a crown, my boys,  
But I 'on't tell ye wheer,  
For 'tis my delight of a shiny night  
In the season of the year

—then the gentlemen who have sold many a hare in their time exchange rapturous winks, and even a head-keeper might be softened by the prevailing enthusiasm. Hodge is a hunter by nature, and you can no more restrain him from poaching than you can restrain a fox. The most popular man in the whole company is the much-incarcerated poacher, and no disguise whatever is made of the fact. A theft of a twopenny cabbage from a neighbour would set a mark against a man for life; a mean action performed when the hob-nailed company gather in the tap-room would be remembered for years; but a sportsman who blackens his face and creeps out at night to net the squire's birds is considered to be a hero, and an honest man to boot. He mentions his convictions gaily, criticises the officials of each gaol that he has visited in the capacity of prisoner, and rouses roars of sympathetic laughter as he tells of his sufferings on the tread-mill. No man or woman thinks of the facts that the squire's pheasants cost about a guinea apiece to rear, that a hare is worth about three-and-sixpence, that a brace of partridges brings two shillings even from the cunning receiver who buys the poachers' plunder. No; they joyously think of the fact that the keepers are diddled, and that satisfies them.

Alas, the glad and sad times alike must die, and the dull prose of October follows hard on the wild jollity of the harvest supper, while Winter peers with haggard gaze over Autumn's shoulder! The hoarse winds blow now, and the tender flush of decay has



begun to touch the leaves with delicate tints. In the morning the gossamer floats in the glittering air and winds ropes of pearls among the stubble; the level rays shoot over a splendid land, and the cold light is thrillingly sweet. But the evenings are chill, and the hollow winds moan, crying, "Summer is dead, and we are the vanguard of Winter. Soon the wild army will be upon you. Steal the sunshine while you may."



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What is the source of that tender solemn melancholy that comes on us all as we feel the glad year dying? It is melancholy that is not painful, and we can nurse it without tempting one stab of real suffering. Each season brings its moods—Spring is hopeful; Summer luxurious; Autumn contented; and then comes that strange time when our thoughts run on solemn things. Can it be that we associate the long decline of the year with the dark closing of life? Surely not—for a boy or girl feels the same pensive, dreary mood, and no one who remembers childhood can fail to think of the wild inarticulate thoughts that passed through the immature brain. Nay, our souls are from God; they are bestowed by the Supreme, and they were from the beginning, and cannot be destroyed. From Plato downwards, no thoughtful man has missed this strange suggestion which seems to present itself unprompted to every mind. Cicero argued it out with consummate dialectic skill; our scientific men come to the same conclusion after years on years of labour spent in investigating phenomena of life and laws of force; and Wordsworth formulated Plato's reasoning in an immortal passage which seems to combine scientific accuracy with exquisite poetic beauty—

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;  
The soul that rises with us—our life's star—  
Hath had elsewhere its setting  
And cometh from afar;  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, Who is our home.  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing boy,  
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows;  
He sees it in his joy.  
The youth who daily farther from the east  
Must travel still is Nature's priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended;  
At length the man perceives it die away  
And fade into the light of coming day.

Had Wordsworth never written another line, that passage would have placed him among the greatest. He follows the glorious burst with these awful lines—

But for those obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things,  
Fallings from us, vanishings;  
Blank misgivings of a creature  
Moving about in worlds not realized;



High instincts before which our mortal nature  
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised.

That is like some golden-tongued utterance of the gods; and thousands of Englishmen, sceptics and believers, have held their breath, abashed, as its full meaning struck home.

Yes; this mysterious thought that haunts our being as we gaze on the saddened fields is not aroused by the immediate impression which the sight gives us; it is too complex, too profound, too mature and significant. It was framed before birth, and it proceeds direct from the Father of all souls, with whom we dwelt before we came to this low earth, and with whom we shall dwell again. If any one ventures to deny the origin of our marvellous knowledge, our sweet, strange impressions, it seems to us that he must risk bordering on impiety.



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So far then I have wandered from the commonplace sweetness of the shorn fields, and I almost forgot to speak about the birds. Watch the swallows as they gather together and talk with their low pretty twitter. Their parliament has begun; and surely no one who watches their proceedings can venture to scoff at the transcendental argument which I have just now stated. Those swift, pretty darlings will soon be flying through the pitchy gloom of the night, and they will dart over three or four thousand miles with unerring aim till they reach the far-off spot where they cheated our winter last year. Some will nest amid the tombs of Egyptian kings, some will find out rosy haunts in Persia, some will soon be wheeling and twittering happily over the sullen breast of the rolling Niger. Who—ah, who guides that flight? Think of it. Man must find his way by the stars and the sun. Day by day he must use elaborate instruments to find out where his vessel is placed; and even his instruments do not always save him from miles of error. But the little bird plunges through the high gulfs of air and flies like an arrow to the selfsame spot where it lived before it last went off on the wild quest over shadowy continents and booming seas. “Hereditary instinct,” says the scientific man. Exactly so; and, if the swallow unerringly traverses the line crossed by its ancestors, even though the old land has long been whelmed in steep-down gulfs of the sea, does not that show us something? Does it, or does it not, make my saying about the soul seem reasonable?

I have followed the swallows, but the fieldfares and the buntings must also go soon. They will make their way South also, though some may go in leisurely fashion to catch the glorious burst of spring in Siberia. I have been grievously puzzled and partly delighted by Mr. Seebohm’s account of the birds’ pilgrimage, and it has given me hours of thought. We dwell amid mystery, and, as the leaves redden year by year, here recurs one of the chiefest mysteries that ever perplexed the soul of man. Indeed, we are shadowed around with mystery and there is not one red leaf whirled by the wind among those moaning woods which does not represent a miracle.

We cannot fly from these shores, but our joys come each in its day. For pure gladness and keen colour nothing can equal one of these glorious October mornings, when the reddened fronds of the brackens are silvered with rime, and the sun strikes flashes of delight from them. Then come those soft November days when the winds moan softly amid the Aeolian harps of the purple hedgerows, and the pale drizzle falls ever and again. Even then we may pick our pleasures discreetly, if we dwell in the country, while, as for the town, are there not pleasant fires and merry evenings? Then comes the important thought of the poor. Ah, it is woful! “‘Pleasant fires and merry evenings,’ say you?”—so I can fancy some pinched sufferer saying, “What sort of merry evenings shall we have, when the fogs



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crawl murderously, or the sleet lashes the sodden roads?" Alas and alas! Those of us who dwell amid pleasant sights and sounds are apt in moments of piercing joy to forget the poor who rarely know joy at all. But we must not be careless. By all means let those who can do so snatch their enjoyment from the colour, the movement, the picturesque sadness of the fading year; but let them think with pity of the time that is coming, and prepare to do a little toward lifting that ghastly burden of suffering that weighs on so many of our fellows. Gazing around on the flying shadows driven by the swift wind, and listening to the quivering sough amid the shaken trees, I have been led far and near into realms of strange speculation. So it is ever in this fearful and wonderful life; there is not the merest trifle that can happen which will not lead an eager mind away toward the infinite. Never has this mystic ordinance touched my soul so poignantly as during the hours when I watched for a little the dying of the year, and branched swiftly into zigzag reflections that touched the mind with fear and joy in turn. Adieu, fair fields! Adieu, wild trees! Where will next year's autumn find us? Hush! Does not the very gold and red of the leaves hint to us that the sweet sad time will return again and find us maybe riper?

*October, 1886.*

### *BEHIND THE VEIL.*

"Men of all castes, if they fulfil their assigned duties, enjoy in heaven the highest imperishable bliss. Afterwards, when a man who has fulfilled his duties returns to this world, he obtains, by virtue of a remainder of merit, birth in a distinguished family, beauty of form, beauty of complexion, strength, aptitude for learning, wisdom, wealth, and the gift of fulfilling the laws of his caste or order. Therefore in both worlds he dwells in happiness, rolling like a wheel from one world to the other." Thus the Brahmans have settled the problem of the life that follows the life on earth. Those strange and subtle men seem to have reasoned themselves into a belief in dreams, and they speak with cool confidence, as though they were describing scenes as vivid and material as are the crowds in a bazaar. There is no hesitation for them; they describe the features of the future existence with the dry minuteness of a broker's catalogue. The Wheel of Life rolls, and far above the weary cycle of souls Buddha rests in an attitude of benediction; he alone has achieved Nirvana—he alone is aloof from gods and men. The yearning for immortality has in the case of the Brahman passed into certainty, and he describes his heavens and his hells as though the All-wise had placed no dim veil between this world and the world beyond. Most arithmetically minute are all the Brahman's pictures, and he never stops to hint at a doubt. His hells are twenty-two in number, each applying a new variety of physical and moral pain. We men of the West smile at the grotesque dogmatism of the Orientals; and yet we have



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no right to smile. In our way we are as keen about the great question as the Brahmans are, and for us the problem of problems may be stated in few words—"Is there a future life?" All our philosophy, all our laws, all our hopes and fears are concerned with that paralyzing question, and we differ from the Hindoo only in that we affect an extravagant uncertainty, while he sincerely professes an absolute certainty. The cultured Western man pretends to dismiss the problem with a shrug; he labels himself as an agnostic or by some other vague definition, and he is fond of proclaiming his idea that he knows and can know nothing. That is a pretence. When the philosopher says that he does not know and does not care what his future may be, he speaks insincerely; he means that he cannot prove by experiment the fact of a future life—or, as Mr. Ruskin puts it, "he declares that he never found God in a bottle"—but deep down in his soul there is a knowledge that influences his lightest action. The man of science, the "advanced thinker," or whatever he likes to call himself, proves to us by his ceaseless protestations of doubt and unbelief that he is incessantly pondering the one subject which he would fain have us fancy he ignores. At heart he is in full sympathy with the Brahman, with the rude Indian, with the impassioned English Methodist, with all who cannot shake off the mystic belief in a life that shall go on behind the veil. When the pagan emperor spoke to his own parting soul, he asked the piercing question that our sceptic must needs put, whether he like it or no—

Soul of me, floating and flitting and fond,  
Thou and this body were life-mates together!  
Wilt thou be gone now—and whither?  
Pallid and naked and cold,  
Not to laugh or be glad as of old!

Theology of any description is far out of my path, but I have the wish and the right to talk gravely about the subject that dwarfs all others. A logician who tries to scoff away any faith I count as almost criminal. Mockery is the fume of little hearts, and the worst and craziest of mockers is the one who grins in presence of a mystery that strikes wise and deep-hearted men with a solemn fear which has in it nothing ignoble. I would as lief play circus pranks by a mother's deathbed as try to find flippant arguments to disturb a sincere faith.

First, then, let us know what the uncompromising iconoclasts have to tell about the universal belief in immortality. They have a very pretentious line of reasoning, which I may summarise thus. Life appeared on earth not less than three hundred thousand years ago. First of all our planet hung in the form of vapour, and drifted with millions of other similar clouds through space; then the vapour became liquid; then the globular form was assumed, and the flying ball began to rotate round the great attracting body. We cannot tell how living forms first came on earth; for they could not arise by spontaneous generation,



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in spite of all that Dr. Bastian may say. Of the coming of life we can say nothing—rather an odd admission, by-the-way, for gentlemen who are so sure of most things—but we know that some low organism did appear—and there is an end of that matter. No two organisms can possibly be exactly alike; and the process of differentiation began in the very shrine. The centuries passed, and living organisms became more and more complex; the slowly-cooling ball of the earth was covered with greenery, but no flower was to be seen. Then insects were attracted by brightly-coloured leaves; then flowers and insects acted and reacted on each other. But there is no need to trace every mark on the scale. It is enough to say that infinitely-diversified forms of life branched off from central stocks, and the process of variation went on steadily. Last of all, in a strange environment, a certain small upright creature appeared. He was not much superior in development to the anthropoid apes that we now know—in fact, there is less difference between an orang and a Bosjesman than there is between the primitive man and the modern Caucasian man. This creature, hairy and brown as a squirrel, stunted in stature, skinny of limb, was our immediate progenitor. So say the confident scientific men. The owner of the queer ape-like skull found at Neanderthal belonged to a race that was ultimately to develop into Shakespeares and Newtons and Napoleons. In all the enormous series that had its first term in the primeval ooze and its last term in man, one supreme motive had actuated every individual. The desire of life, growing more intense with each new development, was the main influence that secured continuance of life. The beings that had the desire of life scantily developed were overcome in the struggle for existence by those in whom the desire of life was strong. Thus in man, after countless generations, the wish for life had become the master-power holding dominion over the body. As the various branches of the human race moved upward, the passionate love of life grew so strong that no individual could bear to think of resigning this pleasing anxious being and proceeding to fall into dumb forgetfulness. Men saw their comrades stricken by some dark force that they could not understand. The strong limbs grew lax first, and then hopelessly stiff; the bright eye was dulled; and it soon became necessary to hide the inanimate thing under the soil. It was impossible for those who had the quick blood flowing in their veins to believe that a time would come when feeling would be known no more. This fierce clinging to life had at last its natural outcome. Men found that at night, when the quicksilver current of sleep ran through their veins and their bodies were quiescent, they had none the less thoughts as of life. The body lay still; but something in alliance with the body gave them impressions of vivid waking vigour and action. Men fancied that they fought, hunted,



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loved, hated; and yet all the time their limbs were quiet. What could it be that forced the slumbering man to believe himself to be in full activity? It must be some invisible essence independent of the bones and muscles. Therefore when a man died it followed that the body which was buried must have parted permanently from the mystic “something” that caused dreams. That mystic “something” therefore lived on after the death of the body. The bodily organs were mere accidental encumbrances; the real “man” was the viewless creature that had the visions of the night. The body might go; but the thing which by and by was named “soul” was imperishable.

I can see the drift of foggy argument. The writer means to say that the belief in immortality sprang up because the wish was father to the thought. Men longed to live, and thus they persuaded themselves that they would live; and, one refinement after another having been added to the vague-minded savage’s animal yearning, we have the elaborate system of theology and the reverential faith that guide the lives of civilized human entities. Very pretty! Then the literary critic steps in and shows how the belief in immortality has been enlarged and elaborated since the days of Saul, the son of Kish. When the witch of Endor saw gods ascending from the earth, she was only anticipating the experience of sorcerers who ply their trade in the islands of the Pacific. Professor Huxley admires the awful description of Saul’s meeting with the witch; but the Professor shows that the South Sea islanders also see gods ascending out of the earth, and he thinks that the Eastern natives in Saul’s day encouraged a form of ancestor-worship. The literary critic says ancestor-worship is one of the great branches of the religion of mankind. Its principles are not difficult to understand, for they plainly keep up the social relations of the living world. The dead ancestor, now passed into a deity, goes on protecting his family and receiving suit and service from them as of old. The dead chief still watches over his own tribe, still holds his authority by helping friends and harming enemies, still rewards the right and sharply punishes the wrong. That, then, was the kind of worship prevalent in the time of Saul, and the gods were only the ancestors of the living. Well, this may be admirable as science, but, as I summarized the long argument, I felt as though something must give way.

Then we are told that our sacred book, the Old Testament, contains no reference to the future life—rather ignores the notion, in fact. It appears that, when Job wrote about the spirit that passed before him and caused all the hair of his flesh to stand up, he meant an enemy, or a goat, or something of that species. Moreover, when it is asserted that Enoch “was not, for God took him,” no reference is made to Enoch’s future existence. The whole of the thesis regarding the Shadow Land has been built up little by little, just as our infinitely perfect bodily organization has been gradually formed. It took at least thirty thousand years to evolve the crystalline lens of the human eye, and it required many thousands of years to evolve from the crude savagery of the early Jews the elaborate theories of the modern Buddhists, Islamites, and Christians.



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Certainly this same evolution has much to answer for. I utterly fail to see how a wish can give rise to a belief that comes before the wish is framed in the mind. More than this, I know that, even when human beings crave extinction most—when the prospect of eternal sleep is more than sweet, when the bare thought of continued existence is a horror—the belief in, or rather the knowledge of, immortality is still there, and the wretch who would fain perish knows that he cannot.

As for the mathematically-minded thinkers, I must give them up. They say, “Here are two objects of consciousness whose existence can be verified; one we choose to call the body, the other we call the soul or mind or spirit, or what you will. The soul may be called a ‘function’ of the body, or the body may be called a ‘function’ of the soul—at any rate, they vary together. The tiniest change in the body causes a corresponding change in the soul. As the body alters from the days when the little ducts begin to feed the bones with lime up to the days when the bones are brittle and the muscles wither away, so does the soul alter. The infant’s soul is different from the boy’s, the boy’s from the adolescent man’s, the young man’s from the middle-aged man’s, and so on to the end. Now, since every change in the body, no matter how infinitesimally small, is followed by a corresponding change in the soul, then it is plain that, when the body becomes extinct, its ‘function,’ the soul, must also become extinct.”

This is even more appalling than the reasoning of the biologist. But is there not a little flaw somewhere? We take a branch from a privet-hedge and shake it; some tiny eggs fall down. In time a large ugly caterpillar comes from each egg; but, according to the mathematical men, the caterpillar does not exist, since the egg has become naught. Good! The caterpillar wraps itself in a winding thread, and we have an egg-shaped lump which lies as still as a pebble. Then presently from that bundle of thread there comes a glorious winged creature which flies away, leaving certain ragged odds and ends. But surely the bundle of threads and the moth were as much connected as the body and the soul? Logically, then, the moth does not exist after the cocoon is gone, any more than the soul exists after the body is gone! I feel very unscientific indeed as we put forth this proposition, and yet perhaps some simple folk will follow me.

God will not let the soul die; it is a force that must act throughout the eternity before us, as it acted throughout the eternity that preceded our coming on earth. No physical force ever dies—each force merely changes its form or direction. Heat becomes motion, motion is transformed into heat, but the force still exists. It is not possible then that the soul of man—the subtlest, strongest force of all—should ever be extinguished. Every analogy that we can see, every fact of science that we can understand, tells us that the essence which



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each of us calls "I" must exist for ever as it has existed from eternity. Let us think of a sweet change that shall merely divest us of the husk of the body, even as the moth is divested of the husk of the caterpillar. Space will be as nothing to the soul—can we not even now transport ourselves in an instant beyond the sun? We can see with the soul's eye the surface of the stars, we know what they are made of, we can weigh them, and we can prove that our observation is rigidly accurate even though millions of miles lie between us and the object which we describe so confidently. When the body is gone, the soul will be more free to traverse space than it is even now.

*February, 1888.*

Extracts from Reviews of the First Edition.

"Mr. Runciman is terribly in earnest in the greater part of this volume, especially in the several articles on 'Drink.' He is eminently practical, withal; and not satisfied with describing and deploring the effects of drunkenness, he gives us a recipe which he warrants to cure the most hardened dipsomaniac within a week. We have not quoted even the titles of all Mr. Runciman's essays; but they are all wholesome in tone, and show a hearty love of the open air and of outdoor amusement, in spite of his well-deserved strictures on various forms of so-called 'sport,' while sometimes, notably in the Essay on 'Genius and Respectability,' he touches the higher notes of feeling."—*Saturday Review*.

"Mr. Runciman is intensely earnest, and directs his arrows with force and precision against those 'joints in our social armour' which his keen vision detects. There is a purpose in all Mr. Runciman says; and although one cannot always share his enthusiasm or accept his conclusions, it is impossible to doubt his sincerity as a moral reformer and his zeal in the cause of philanthropy."—*Academy*.

"Few sermons, one would fancy, could do more good than this book, honestly considered. It speaks plain sense on faults and follies that are usually gently satirised; and makes fine invigorating reading. The book warmly deserves success."—*Scotsman*.

"Mr. Runciman expresses himself with a vigour which leaves nothing to be desired. He leaves no doubt of what he thinks,—and he thinks, anyhow, on the right side.... Altogether a very vigorous deliverance."—*Spectator*.

"No one can read these pleasant thoughtful essays without being the better for it; all being written with the vigour and grace for which Mr. Runciman is distinguished."—*Newcastle Daily Chronicle*.

“Essays which form a most important contribution to the literature of social reform.”—*Methodist Times*.

“Mr. Runciman has produced a book which will compel people to read, and it has many pages which ought to compel them to think, and to act as well.”—*Manchester Examiner*.



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“Mr. Runciman is endowed with a vigorous and pleasing style, and his facile pen has obviously been made expert by much use. In dealing with some of the more threadbare problems, such as the drink question and the sporting mania, he brings considerable novelty and freshness to their treatment, and when fairly roused he hits out at social abuses with a vigour and indignant sincerity which are very refreshing to the jaded reader ...He has been successful in producing a delightfully readable book, and even when he does not produce conviction, he will certainly succeed in securing attention and inspiring interest.”—*Bradford Observer*.

“The essays are a fine contribution in the cause of manly self-culture and elevation of moral tone.”—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

“To those who enjoy essays on current topics, this will be found an acceptable and instructive volume.”—*Public Opinion*.

“His essays are always entertaining and suggestive ...Mr. Runciman, as is well-known, has a forcible and effective style.”—*Star*.

“Mr. Runciman is a bard hitter, and evidently speaks from conviction, and there is such an honest and clear-minded tone about these papers, that even those who do not agree with all the conclusions drawn in them will not regret having read what Mr. Runciman has to say on social questions.”—*Graphic*.