By the Christmas Fire

Samuel McChord Crothers



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By the Christmas Fire

BY

SAMUEL McCHORD CROTHERS



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To O. L. F.

A CHEERFUL FIRE-WORSHIPER

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I

The Bayonet-Poker



As I sit by my Christmas fire I now and then give it a poke with a bayonet. It is an old-fashioned British bayonet which has seen worse days. I picked it up in a little shop in Birmingham for two shillings. I was attracted to it as I am to all reformed characters. The hardened old sinner, having had enough of war, was a candidate for a peaceful position. I was glad to have a hand in his reformation.

To transform a sword into a pruning hook is a matter for a skilled smith, but to change a bayonet into a poker is within the capacity of the least mechanical. All that is needed is to cause the bayonet to forsake

the murderous rifle barrel and cleave to a short wooden handle. Henceforth its function is not to thrust itself into the vitals of men, but to encourage combustion on winter nights.

The bayonet-poker fits into the philosophy of Christmas, at least into the way I find it easy to philosophize. It seems a better symbol of what is happening than the harps of gold and the other beautiful things of which the hymn-writers sing, but which ordinary people have never seen. The golden harps were made for no other purpose than to produce celestial harmony. They suggest a scene in which peace and good-will come magically and reign undisturbed. Everything is exquisitely fitted for high uses. It is not so with the bayonet that was, and the poker that is. For it peace and good-will are afterthoughts. They are not even remotely suggested in its original constitution. And yet, for all that, it serves excellently as an instrument of domestic felicity.

The difficulty with the Christmas message is not in getting itself proclaimed, but in getting itself believed; that is, in any practicable fashion. Every one recognizes the eminent desirability of establishing more amicable relations between the members of the human family. But is this amiable desire likely to be fulfilled in this inherently bellicose world?

The argument against Christmas has taken a menacingly scientific form. A deluge of cold water in the form of unwelcome facts has been thrown upon

our enthusiasm for humanity.

"Peace on earth," it is said, "is against Nature. It flies in the face of the processes of evolution. You have only to look about you to see that everything has been made for a quite different purpose. For ages Mother Nature has been keeping house in her own free-and-easy fashion, gradually improving her family by killing off the weaker members, and giving them as food to the strong. It is a plan that has worked well—for the strong. When we interrogate Nature as to the 'reason why' of her most marvelous contrivances, her answer has a grim simplicity. We are like Red Riding-Hood when she drew back the bed-curtains and saw the wolfish countenance. —'What is your great mouth made for, grandmother?'—'To eat you with, my dear.'

"To eat, while avoiding the unpleasant alternative of being eaten, is a motive that goes far and explains much. The haps and mishaps of the hungry make up natural history. The eye of the eagle is developed that it may see its prey from afar, its wings are strong that it may pounce upon it, its beak and talons are sharpened that it may tear it in pieces. By right of these superiorities, the eagle reigns as king among birds.

"The wings of the eagle, the sinews of the tiger, the brain of the man, are primarily weapons. Each creature seizes the one that it finds at hand, and uses it for offense and defense. The weapon is improved by use. The brain of the man has proved a better weapon than beak or talons, and so it has come to pass that man is lord of creation. He is able to devour at will creatures who once were his rivals.

"By using his brain, he has sought out many

inventions. The sum total of these inventions we call by the imposing name Civilization. It is a marvelously tempered weapon, in the hands of the strong races. Alas, for the backward peoples who fall beneath it. One device after another has been added for the extermination of the slow-witted.

"Even religion itself assumes to the anthropologist a sinister aspect. The strong nations have always been religious. Their religion has helped them in their struggle for the mastery. There are many unpleasant episodes in history. Spiritual wealth, like material wealth, is often predatory.

"In the Book of Judges there is a curious glimpse into a certain kind of religiousness. A man of Mt. Ephraim named Micah had engaged a young Levite from Bethlehem-Judah as his spiritual adviser. He promised him a modest salary, ten shekels of silver annually, and a suit of clothes, and his board. 'And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. And Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. Then said Micah, Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.'

"This pleasant relation continued till a freebooting party of Danites appeared. They had discovered a bit of country where the inhabitants 'dwelt in security, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; for there was none in the land, possessing authority, that might put *them* to shame in any thing, and they were far from the Zidonians.' It was just the opportunity for expansion which the children of Dan had been waiting for, so they marched merrily against the unprotected valley. On the way they

seized Micah's priest. 'And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be priest unto the house of one man, or to be priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.'

"Of course, Micah didn't like it, and called out, 'Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and are gone away, and what have I more?' The Danites answered after the manner of the strong, 'Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows fall upon you, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household. And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house.'

"Is not that the way of the world? The strong get what they want and the weak have to make the best of it. Micah, when he turned back from a hopeless conflict, was a philosopher, and the young Levite when he went forward was a pietist. Both the philosophy and the piety were by-products of the activity of the children of Dan. They sadly needed the priest to sanctify the deeds of the morrow when 'they took that which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people quiet and secure, and smote them with the edge of the sword; and they burnt the city with fire. And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidoh, and they had no dealings with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Beth-rehob.'

"The wild doings in the little valley that lieth by

Beth-rehob have been repeated endlessly. Whittier describes the traditional alliance between Religion and sanguinary Power:—

> Feet red from war fields trod the
> church aisles holy,
> With trembling reverence, and the
> oppressor there
> Kneeling before his priest, abased
> and lowly,
> Crushed human hearts beneath the
> knee of prayer.

"When we inquire too curiously about the origin of the things which we hold most precious, we come to suspect that we are little better than the receivers of stolen goods. How could it be otherwise with the descendants of a long line of freebooters? How are we to uphold the family fortunes if we forsake the means by which they were obtained? Are we not fated by our very constitutions to continue a predatory life?"

There are lovers of peace and of justice to whom such considerations appeal with tragic force. They feel that moral ideals have arisen only to mock us, and to put us into hopeless antagonism to the world in which we live. In the rude play of force, many things have been developed that are useful in our struggle for existence. But one faculty has developed that is destined to be our undoing,—it is Conscience. Natural history does not give any satisfactory account of it. It runs counter to our other tendencies. It makes us miserable just when we are getting the advantage of others. Now, getting the advantage of others we had understood was the whole of the exciting game of life. To plot for this has marvelously

sharpened human wit. But Conscience, just at the critical moment, cries "For shame!" It is an awkward situation. Not only the rules of the game, but the game itself, is called in question.

As a consequence, many conscientious persons lose all the zest of living. The existing world seems to them brutal, its order, tyranny; its morality, organized selfishness; its accepted religion, a shallow conventionality. In such a world as this, the good man stands like a gladiator who has suddenly become a Christian. He is overwhelmed with horror at the bloody sports, yet he is forced into the arena and must fight. That is his business, and he cannot rise above it.

I cannot, myself, take such a gloomy view of the interesting little planet on which I happen to find myself. I take great comfort in the thought that the world is still unfinished, and that what we see lying around us is not the completed product, but only the raw material. And this consolation rises into positive cheer when I learn that there is a chance for us to take a hand in the creative work. It matters very little at this stage of the proceedings whether things are good or bad. The question for us is, What is the best use to which we can put them? We are not to be bullied by facts. If we don't like them as they are, we may remould them nearer to our heart's desire. At least we may try.

Here is my bayonet. A scientific gentleman, seeing it lying on my hearth, might construct a very pretty theory about its owner. A bayonet is made to stab with. It evidently implies a stabber. To this I could only answer, "My dear sir, do not look at the bayonet, look at me. Do I strike you as a person who

would be likely to run you through, just because I happen to have the conveniences to do it with? Sit down by the fire and we will talk it over, and you will see that you have nothing to fear. What the Birmingham manufacturer designed this bit of steel for was his affair, not mine. When it comes to design, two can play at that game. What I use this for, you shall presently see."

Now, here we have the gist of the matter. Most of the gloomy prognostications which distress us arise from the habit of attributing to the thing a power for good or evil which belongs only to the person. It is one of the earliest forms of superstition. The anthropologist calls it "fetichism" when he finds it among primitive peoples. When the same notion is propounded by advanced thinkers, we call it "advanced thought." We attribute to the Thing a malignant purpose and an irresistible potency, and we crouch before it as if it were our master. When the Thing is set going, we observe its direction with awe-struck resignation, just as people once drew omens from the flight of birds. What are we that we should interfere with the Tendencies of Things?

The author of "The Wisdom of Solomon" gives a vivid picture of the terror of the Egyptians when they were "shut up in their houses, the prisoners of darkness, and fettered with the bonds of a long night, they lay there exiled from eternal providence." Everything seemed to them to have a malign purpose. "Whether it were a whistling wind, or a melodious noise of birds among the spreading branches, or a pleasing fall of water running violently, or a terrible sound of stones cast down, or a running that could not be seen of skipping beasts, or a roaring voice of most savage wild beasts, or a rebounding echo from the hollow

mountains; these things made them swoon for fear." For, says the author, "fear is nothing else than a betraying of the succours that reason offers."

We have pretty generally risen above the primitive forms of this superstition. We do not fear that a rock or tree will go out of its way to harm us. We are not troubled by the suspicion that some busybody of a planet is only waiting its chance to do us an ill turn. We are inclined to take the dark of the moon with equanimity.

But when it comes to moral questions we are still dominated by the idea of the fatalistic power of inanimate things. We cannot think it possible to be just or good, not to speak of being cheerful, without looking at some physical fact and saying humbly "By your leave." We personify our tools and machines, and the occult symbols of trade, and then as abject idolaters we bow down before the work of our own hands. We are awe-struck at their power, and magnify the mystery of their existence. We only pray that they may not turn us out of house and home, because of some blunder in our ritual observance. That they will make it very uncomfortable for us, we take for granted. We have resigned ourselves to that long ago. They are so very complicated that they will make no allowance for us, and will not permit us to live simply as we would like. We are really very plain people, and easily flurried and worried by superfluities. We could get along very nicely and, we are sure, quite healthfully, if it were not for our Things. They set the pace for us, and we have to keep up.

We long for peace on earth, but of course we can't have it. Look at our warships and our forts and our

great guns. They are getting bigger every year. No sooner do we begin to have an amiable feeling toward our neighbors than some one invents a more ingenious way by which we may slaughter them. The march of invention is irresistible, and we are being swept along toward a great catastrophe.

We should like very much to do business according to the Golden Rule. It strikes us as being the only decent method of procedure. We have no ill feeling toward our competitors. We should be pleased to see them prosper. We have a strong preference for fair play. But of course we can't have it, because the corporations, those impersonal products of modern civilization, won't allow it. We must not meddle with them, for if we do we might break some of the laws of political economy, and in that case nobody knows what might happen.

We have a great desire for good government. We should be gratified if we could believe that the men who pave our streets, and build our school-houses, and administer our public funds, are well qualified for their several positions. But we cannot, in a democracy, expect to have expert service. The tendency of politics is to develop a Machine. The Machine is not constructed to serve us. Its purpose is simply to keep itself going. When it once begins to move, it is only prudent in us to keep out of the way. It would be tragical to have it run over us.

So, in certain moods, we sit and grumble over our formidable fetiches. Like all idolaters, we sometimes turn iconoclasts. In a short-lived fit of anger we smash the Machine. Having accomplished this feat, we feel a little foolish, for we don't know what to do next.

Fortunately for the world there are those who are neither idolaters nor iconoclasts. They do not worship Things, nor fear them, nor despise them,—they simply use them.

In the Book of Baruch there is inserted a letter purporting to be from Jeremiah to the Hebrew captives in Babylon. The prophet discourses on the absurdity of the worship of inanimate things, and incidentally draws on his experience in gardening. An idol, he says, is "like to a white thorn in an orchard, that every bird sitteth upon." It is as powerless, he says, to take the initiative "as a scarecrow in a garden of cucumbers that keepeth nothing." In his opinion, one wide-awake man in the cucumber patch is worth all the scarecrows that were ever constructed. "Better therefore is the just man that hath none idols."

What brave air we breathe when we join the company of the just men who have freed themselves from idolatry! Listen to Governor Bradford as he enumerates the threatening facts which the Pilgrims to New England faced. He mentions all the difficulties which they foresaw, and then adds, "It was answered that all great and honorable actions were accompanied with great difficulties, and must be enterprised with answerable courages."

What fine spiritual audacity! Not courage, if you please, but courages. There is much virtue in the plural. It was as much as to say, "All our eggs are not in one basket. We are likely to meet more than one kind of danger. What of it? We have more than one kind of courage. It is well to be prepared for emergencies."

It was the same spirit which made William Penn speak of his colony on the banks of the Delaware as the "Holy Experiment." In his testimony to George Fox, he says, "He was an original and no man's copy. He had not learned what he said by study. Nor were they notional nor speculative, but sensible and practical, the setting up of the Kingdom of God in men's hearts, and the way of it was his work. His authority was inward and not outward, and he got it and kept it by the love of God. He was a divine and a naturalist, and all of God Almighty's making."

In the presence of men of such moral originality, ethical problems take on a new and exciting aspect. What is to happen next? You cannot find out by noting the trend of events. A peep into a resourceful mind would be more to the purpose. That mind perceives possibilities beyond the ken of a duller intelligence.

I should like to have some competent person give us a History of Moral Progress as a part of the History of Invention. I know there is a distrust of Invention on the part of many good people who are so enamored of the ideal of a simple life that they are suspicious of civilization. The text from Ecclesiastes, "God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions," has been used to discourage any budding Edisons of the spiritual realm. Dear old Alexander Cruden inserted in his Concordance a delicious definition of invention as here used: "Inventions: New ways of making one's self more wise and happy than God made us."

It is astonishing how many people share this fear that, if they exert their minds too much, they may become better than the Lord intended them to be. A

new way of being good, or of doing good, terrifies them. Nevertheless moral progress follows the same lines as all other progress. First there is a conscious need. Necessity is the mother of invention. Then comes the patient search for the ways and means through which the want may be satisfied. Ages may elapse before an ideal may be realized. Numberless attempts must be made, the lessons of the successive failures must be learned. It is in the ability to draw the right inference from failure that inventive genius is seen.

"It would be madness and inconsistency," said Lord Bacon, "to suppose that things which have never yet been performed can be performed without using some hitherto untried means." The inventor is not discouraged by past failures, but he is careful not to repeat them slavishly. He may be compelled to use the same elements, but he is always trying some new combination. If he must fail once more, he sees to it that it shall be in a slightly different way. He has learned in twenty ways how the thing cannot be done. This information is very useful to him, and he does not begrudge the labor by which it has been obtained. All this is an excellent preparation for the twenty-first attempt, which may possibly reveal the way it *can* be done. When thousands of good heads are working upon a problem in this fashion, something happens.

For several generations the physical sciences have offered the most inviting field for inventive genius. Here have been seen the triumphs of the experimental method. There are, however, evidences that many of the best intellects are turning to the fascinating field of morals. Indeed, the very success of physical research makes this inevitable.

When in 1783 the brothers Montgolfier ascended a mile above the earth in a balloon there was a thrill of excitement, as the spectators felt that the story of Dædalus had been taken from the world of romance into the world of fact. But, after all, the invention went only a little way in the direction of the navigation of the air. It is one thing to float, and another thing to steer a craft toward a desired haven. The balloon having been invented, the next and more difficult task was to make it dirigible. It was the same problem that had puzzled the inventors of primitive times who had discovered that, by making use of a proper log, they could be carried from place to place on the water. What the landing place should be was, however, a matter beyond their control. They had to trust to the current, which was occasionally favorable to them. In the first exhilaration over their discovery they were doubtless thankful enough to go down stream, even when their business called them up stream. At least they had the pleasant sensation of getting on. They were obeying the law of progress. The uneasy radical who wanted to progress in a predetermined direction must have seemed like a visionary. But the desire to go up stream and across stream and beyond sea persisted, and the log became a boat, and paddles and oars and rudder and sail and screw propeller were invented in answer to the ever increasing demand.

But the problem of the dirigibility of a boat, or of a balloon, is simplicity itself compared with the amazing complexity of the problems involved in producing a dirigible civilization. It falls under Bacon's category of "things which never yet have been performed." Heretofore civilizations have floated on the cosmic atmosphere. They have been carried about by mysterious currents till they could

float no longer. Then their wreckage has furnished materials for history.

But all the time human ingenuity has been at work attacking the great problem. Thousands of little inventions have been made, by which we gain temporary control of some of the processes. We are coming to have a consciousness of human society as a whole, and of the possibility of directing its progress. It is not enough to satisfy the modern intellect to devise plans by which we may become more rich or more powerful. We must also tax our ingenuity to find ways for the equitable division of the wealth and the just use of power. We are no longer satisfied with increase in the vast unwieldy bulk of our possessions, we eagerly seek to direct them to definite ends. Even here in America we are beginning to feel that "progress" is not an end in itself. Whether it is desirable or not, depends on the direction of it. Our glee over the census reports is chastened. We are not so certain that it is a clear gain to have a million people live where a few thousand lived before. We insist on asking, How do they live? Are they happier, healthier, wiser? As a city becomes bigger, does it become a better place in which to rear children? If it does not, must not civic ambition seek to remedy the defect?

The author of Ecclesiastes made the gloomy comment upon the civilization of his own day: "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill." In so far as that is true to-day, things are working badly. It must be within our power to remedy such an absurd situation. We have to devise more efficient means for

securing fair play, and for enforcing the rules of the game. We want to develop a better breed of men. In order to do so, we must make this the first consideration. In proportion as the end is clearly conceived and ardently desired, will the effective means be discovered and employed.

Why has the reign of peace and good-will upon the earth been so long delayed? We grow impatient to hear the bells

> Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
> Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
> Ring out the thousand wars of old,
> Ring in the thousand years of
> peace.
>
> Ring in the valiant man and free,
> The larger heart, the kindlier hand.

The answer must be that "the valiant man and free" must, like every one else, learn his business before he can expect to have any measure of success. The kindlier hand must be skilled by long practice before it can direct the vast social mechanism.

The Fury in Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound" described the predicament in which the world has long found itself:—

> The good want power but to weep
> barren tears.
> The powerful goodness want; worse
> need for them.

The wise want love, and those who
love want wisdom;
And all best things are thus
confused to ill.

This is discouraging to the unimaginative mind, but the very confusion is a challenge to human intelligence. Here are all the materials for a more beautiful world. All that is needed is to find the proper combination. Goodness alone will not do the work. Goodness grown strong and wise by much experience is, as the man on the street would say, "quite a different proposition." Why not try it?

We may not live to see any dramatic entrance of the world upon "the thousand years of peace," but we are living in a time when men are rapidly learning the art of doing peacefully many things which once were done with infinite strife and confusion. We live in a time when intelligence is applied to the work of love. The children of light are less content than they once were to be outranked in sagacity by the children of this world. The result is that many things which once were the dreams of saints and sages have come within the field of practical business and practical politics. They are a part of the day's work. A person of active temperament may prefer to live in this stirring period, rather than to have his birth postponed to the millennium.

It is only the incorrigible doctrinaire who refuses to sympathize with the illogical processes by which the world is gradually being made better. With him it is the millennium or nothing. He will tolerate no indirect approach. He will give no credit for partial approximations. He insists on holding every one strictly to his first fault. There shall be no wriggling

out of a false position, no gradual change in function, no adaptations of old tools to new uses.

In the next essay I shall have something to say about this way of looking at things. It would do no harm to stir up the doctrinaire assumptions with the bayonet-poker.

II

On Being a Doctrinaire



The question is sometimes asked by those who devise

tests of literary taste, "If you were cast upon a desert island and were allowed but one book, what book would you choose?"

If I were in such a predicament I should say to the pirate chief who was about to maroon me, "My dear sir, as this island seems, for the time being, to have been overlooked by Mr. Andrew Carnegie, I must ask the loan of a volume from your private library. And if it is convenient for you to allow me but one volume at a time, I pray that it may be the Unabridged Dictionary."

I should choose the Unabridged Dictionary, not only because it is big, but because it is mentally filling. One has the sense of rude plenty such as one gets from looking at the huge wheat elevators in Minneapolis. Here are the harvests of innumerable fields stored up in little space. There are not only vast multitudes of words, but each word means something, and each has a history of its own, and a family relation which it is interesting to trace.

But that which I should value most on my desert island would be the opportunity of acquainting myself with the fine distinctions which are made between different human qualities. It would seem that the Aggregate Mind which made the language is much cleverer than we usually suppose. The most minute differences are infallibly registered in tell-tale words. There are not only words denoting the obvious differences between the good and the bad, the false and the true, the beautiful and the ugly, but there are words which indicate the delicate shades of goodness and truth and beauty as they are curiously blended with variable quantities of badness and falseness and ugliness. There are not only words

which tell what you are, but words which tell what you think you are, and what other people think you are, and what you think they are when you discover that they are thinking that you are something which you think you are not.

In the bright lexicon of youth there is no such word as "fail," but the dictionary makes up for this deficiency. It is particularly rich in words descriptive of our failures. As the procession of the virtues passes by, there are pseudo-virtues that tag on like the small boys who follow the circus. After Goodness come Goodiness and Goody-goodiness; we see Sanctity and Sanctimoniousness, Piety and Pietism, Grandeur and Grandiosity, Sentiment and Sentimentality. When we try to show off we invariably deceive ourselves, but usually we deceive nobody else. Everybody knows that we are showing off, and if we do it well they give us credit for that.

A scholar has a considerable amount of sound learning, and he is afraid that his fellow citizens may not fully appreciate it. So in his conversation he allows his erudition to leak out, with the intent that the stranger should say, "What a modest, learned man he is, and what a pleasure it is to meet him." Only the stranger does not express himself in that way, but says, "What an admirable pedant he is, to be sure." Pedantry is a well-recognized compound, two thirds sound learning and one third harmless vanity.

Sometimes on the street you see a man whom you take for an old acquaintance. You approach with outstretched hand and expectant countenance, but his stony glare of non-recognition gives you pause. The fact that he does not know you gives you time to

perceive that you do not know him and have never seen him before. A superficial resemblance has deceived you. In the dictionary you may find many instances of such mistakes in the moral realm.

One of the most common of these mistakes in identity is the confusion of the Idealist and the Doctrinaire. An idealist is defined as "one who pursues and dwells upon the ideal, a seeker after the highest beauty and good." A doctrinaire may do this also, but he is differentiated as "one who theorizes without sufficient regard for practical considerations, one who undertakes to explain things by a narrow theory or group of theories."

The Idealist is the kind of man we need. He is not satisfied with things as they are. He is one

> Whose soul sees the perfect
> Which his eyes seek in vain.

If a more perfect society is to come, it must be through the efforts of persons capable of such visions. Our schools, churches, and all the institutions of a higher civilization have as their chief aim the production of just such personalities. But why are they not more successful? What becomes of the thousands of young idealists who each year set forth on the quest for the highest beauty and truth? Why do they tire so soon of the quest and sink into the ranks of the spiritually unemployed.

The answer is that many persons who set out to be idealists end by becoming doctrinaires. They identify the highest beauty and truth with their own theories. After that they make no further excursions into the unexplored regions of reality, for fear that they may discover their identification to have been incomplete.

The Doctrinaire is like a mason who has mixed his cement before he is ready to use it. When he is ready the cement has set, and he can't use it. It sticks together, but it won't stick to anything else. George Eliot describes such a predicament in her sketch of the Reverend Amos Barton. Mr. Barton's plans, she says, were, like his sermons, "admirably well conceived, had the state of the case been otherwise."

By eliminating the "state of the case," the Doctrinaire is enabled to live the simple life—intellectually and ethically. The trouble is that it is too simple. To his mind the question, "Is it true?" is never a disturbing one, nor does it lead to a troublesome investigation of matters of fact. His definition of truth has the virtue of perfect simplicity,—"A truth is that which has got itself believed by me." His thoughts form an exclusive club, and when a new idea applies for admission it is placed on the waiting list. A single black-ball from an old member is sufficient permanently to exclude it. When an idea is once in, it has a very pleasant time of it. All the opinions it meets with are clubable, and on good terms with one another. Whether any of them are related to any reality outside their own little circle would be a question that it would be impolite to ask. It would be like asking a correctly attired member who was punctilious in paying his club dues, whether he had also paid his tailor. To the Doctrinaire there seems something sordid and vulgar in the anxiety to make the two ends—theory and practice—meet. It seems to indicate that one is not intellectually in comfortable circumstances.

The Doctrinaire, when he has conceived certain ideals, is not content that they should be cast upon the actual world, to take their chances in the rough-

and-tumble struggle for existence, proving their right to the kingdom by actually conquering it, inch by inch. He cannot endure such tedious delays. He must have the satisfaction of seeing his ideals instantly realized. The ideal life must be lived under ideal conditions. And so, for his private satisfaction, he creates for himself such a world into which he retires.

It is a world of natural law, as he understands natural law. There are no exceptions, no deviation from general principles, no shadings off, no fascinating obscurities, no rude practical jokes, no undignified by-play, no "east windows of divine surprise," no dark unfathomable abysses. He would not allow such things. In his world the unexpected never happens. The endless chain of causation runs smoothly. Every event has a cause, and the cause is never tangled up with the effect, so that you cannot tell where one begins and the other ends. He is intellectually tidy, and everything must be in its place. If something turns up for which he cannot find a place, he sends it to the junk shop.

When the Doctrinaire descends from the homogeneous world which he has constructed, into the actual world which, in the attempt to get itself made, is becoming more amazingly heterogeneous all the time, he is in high dudgeon. The existence of these varied contradictorinesses seems to him a personal affront.

It is as if a person had lived in a natural history museum, where every stuffed animal knew his place, and had his scientific name painted on the glass case. He is suddenly dropped into a tropical jungle where the animals act quite differently. The tigers won't

"stay put," and are liable to turn up just when he doesn't want to see them.

I should not object to his unpreparedness for the actual state of things if the Doctrinaire did not assume the airs of a superior person. He lays all the blame for the discrepancy between himself and the universe on the universe. He has the right key, only the miserable locks won't fit it. Having formed a very clear conception of the best possible world, he looks down patronizingly upon the commonplace people who are trying to make the best out of this imperfect world. Having large possessions in Utopia, he lives the care-free life of an absentee landlord. His praise is always for the dead, or for the yet unborn; when he looks on his contemporaries he takes a gloomy view. That any great man should be now alive, he considers a preposterous assumption. He treats greatness as if it were a disease to be determined only by post-mortem examination.

One of the earliest satires on the character of the Doctrinaire is to be found in the Book of Jonah. Jonah was a prophet by profession. He received a call to preach in the city of Nineveh, which he accepted after some hesitation. He denounced civic corruption and declared that in forty days the city would be destroyed. Having performed this professional duty, Jonah felt that there was nothing left for him but to await with pious resignation the fulfillment of his prophecy. But in this case the unexpected happened, the city repented and was saved. This was gall and wormwood to Jonah. His orderly mind was offended by the disarrangement of his schedule. What was the use of being a prophet if things did not turn out as he said? So we are told "it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry,"

Still he clung to the hope that, in the end, things might turn out badly enough to justify his public utterances. "Then Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city."

Poor grumpy old Jonah! Have we not sat under his preaching, and read his editorials, and pondered his books, full of solemn warnings of what will happen to us if we do not mend our ways? We have been deeply impressed, and in a great many respects we have mended our ways, and things have begun to go better. But Jonah takes no heed of our repentance. He is only thinking of those prophecies of his. Just in proportion as things begin to look up morally, he gets low in his mind and begins to despair of the Republic.

The trouble with Jonah is that he can see but one thing at a time, and see that only in one way. He cannot be made to appreciate the fact that "the world is full of a number of things," and that some of them are not half bad. When he sees a dangerous tendency he thinks that it will necessarily go on to its logical conclusion. He forgets that there is such a thing as the logic of events, which is different from the logical processes of a person who sits outside and prognosticates. There is one tendency which all tendencies have in common, that is, to develop counter tendencies.

There is, for example, a tendency on the part of the gypsy-moth caterpillar to destroy utterly the forests of the United States. But were I addressing a thoughtful company of these caterpillars I should urge them to look upon their own future with modest

self-distrust. However well their programme looks upon paper, it cannot be carried out without opposition. Long before the last tree has been vanquished, the last of the gypsy moths may be fighting for its life against the enemies it has made.

The Doctrinaire is very quick at generalizing. This is greatly to his credit. One of the powers of the human mind on which we set great store is that of entertaining general ideas. This is where we think we have the advantage of the members of the brute creation. They have particular experiences which at the time are very exciting to them, but they have no abstract notions,—or, at least, no way of expressing them to us. We argue that if they really had these ideas they would have invented language long ago, and by this time would have had Unabridged Dictionaries of their own. But we humans do not have to be content with this hand-to-mouth way of thinking and feeling. When we see a hundred things that strike us as being more or less alike, we squeeze them together into one mental package, and give a single name to the whole lot. This is a great convenience and enables us to do our thinking on a large scale. By organizing our various impressions into a union, and inducing them to work together, we are enabled to do collective bargaining with the Universe.

If, for example, I were asked to tell what I think of the individuals inhabiting the United States, I should have to give it up. Assuming a round eighty million persons, all of whom it would be a pleasure to meet, there must be, at the lowest computation, seventy-nine million, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, three hundred and seventy-five people of whose characters I do not know enough to make my

opinion of any value. Of the remaining fragment of the population, my knowledge is not so perfect as I would wish. As for the whole eighty million, suppose I had to give a single thought to each person, I have not enough cogitations to go around.

What we do is to stop the ruinous struggle of competing thoughts by recognizing a community of interests and forming a merger, under the collective term "American." Then all difficulties are minimized. Almost all our theorizing about human affairs is carried on by means of these symbols. Millions of different personalities are merged in one mental picture. We talk of a class even more readily than we talk of an individual.

This is all very well so long as we do not take these generalizations too seriously. The mistake of the Doctrinaire lies not in classifying people, but in treating an individual as if he could belong to only one class at a time. The fact is that each one of us belongs to a thousand classes. There are a great many ways of classifying human beings, and as in the case of the construction of tribal lays, "every single one of them is right," as far as it goes. You may classify people according to race, color, previous condition of servitude, height, weight, shape of their skulls, amount of their incomes, or their ability to write Latin verse. You may inquire whether they belong to the class that goes to church on Sunday, whether they are vaccinationists or anti-vaccinationists, whether they like problem plays, whether they are able to read a short passage from the Constitution of the United States, whether they have dyspepsia or nervous prostration or only think they have; or, if you will, you may make one sweeping division between the sheep and the goats,

and divide mankind according to location, as did the good Boston lady who was accustomed to speak of those who lived out of sight of the Massachusetts State House as "New Yorkers and that kind of people."

Such divisions do no harm so long as you make enough of them. Those who are classed with the goats on one test question will turn up among the sheep when you change the subject. Your neighbor is a wild radical in theology, and you look upon him as a dangerous character. Try him on the tariff, and you find him conservative to a fault.

I have listened, of a Monday morning, to an essay in a ministers' meeting on the problem of the "Unchurched." The picture presented to the imagination was a painful one. In the discussion that followed, the class of the Unchurched was not clearly differentiated from the other unfortunate class of the Unwashed. In the evening I attended a lecture by a learned professor who, as I happened to know, was not as regular in church attendance as he should be. As I listened to him I said to myself, "Who would have suspected that he is one of the Unchurched?"

Fortunately, all the disabilities pertaining to the Unwashed and Unchurched and Uncultivated and Unvaccinated and Unskilled and Unbaptized and Unemployed do not necessarily rest upon the same person. Usually there are palliating circumstances and compensating advantages that are to be taken into account. In a free country there is a career for all sorts of talent, and if one fails in one direction he may reach great dignity in another. I may be a mere nobody, so far as having had ancestors in the Colonial Wars is concerned, and yet I may be high up

in the Knights of Pythias. A good lady who goes to the art class is able to talk of Botticelli. But she has no right to look down upon her husband as an inferior creature because he supposes that Botticelli is one of Mr. Heinz's fifty-seven kinds of pickles. He may know some things which she does not, and they may be fully as important.

The great abuse of the generalizing faculty comes in the arraying class against class. Among the University Statutes of Oxford in the Middle Ages was one directed against this evil. Dire academic punishments were threatened to students who made "odious comparisons of country to country, nobility to ignobility, Faculty to Faculty." I sympathize deeply with rules against such "unhonest garrulities." It is a pity that they cannot be enforced.

The mischief comes in reducing all differences to the categories of the Inferior and Superior. The fallacy of such division appears when we ask, Superior in what? Inferior in what? Anybody can be a superior person if he can only choose his ground and stick to it. That is the trick that royal personages have understood. It is etiquette for kings to lead the conversation always. One must be a very stupid person not to shine under such circumstances.

Suppose you have to give an audience to a distinguished archæologist who has spent his life in Babylonian excavations. Fifteen minutes before his arrival you take up his book and glance through it till you find an easy page that you can understand. You master page 142. Here you are secure. You pour into the astonished ear of your guest your views upon the subject. Such ripe erudition in one whose chief interests lie elsewhere seems to him almost

superhuman. Your views on page 142 are so sound that he longs to continue the conversation into what had before seemed the more important matter contained in page 143. But etiquette forbids. It is your royal prerogative to confine yourself to the safe precincts of page 142, and you leave it to his imagination to conceive the wisdom which might have been given to the world had it been your pleasure to expound the whole subject of archæology.

I had myself, in a very humble way, an experience of this kind. In a domestic crisis it was necessary to placate a newly arrived and apparently homesick cook. I am unskilled in diplomacy, but it was a case where the comfort of an innocent family depended on diplomatic action. I learned that the young woman came from Prince Edward Island. Up to that moment I confess that Prince Edward Island had been a mere geographical expression. All my ideas about it were wrong, I having mixed it up with Cape Breton, which as I now know is quite different. But instantly Prince Edward Island became a matter of intense interest. Our daily bread was dependent on it. I entered my study and with atlas and encyclopædia sought to atone for the negligence of years. I learned how Prince Edward Island lay in relation to Nova Scotia, what were its principal towns, its climate, its railroad and steam-boat connections, and acquired enough miscellaneous information to adorn a five-minutes personally conducted conversation. Thus freshly furnished forth, I adventured into the kitchen.

Did she take the boat from Georgetown to Pictou? She did. Isn't it too bad that the strait is sometimes frozen over in winter? It is. Some people cross to

New Brunswick on ice boats from Cape Traverse; that must be exciting and rather cold. She thought so too. Did she come from Charlottetown? No. Out Tignish way? Yes; halfway from Charlottetown to Tignish. Queen's County? Good apple country? Yes, she never saw such good apples as they raise in Queen's County. When I volunteered the opinion that the weather on Prince Edward Island is fine but changeable, I was received on the footing of an old inhabitant.

I did not find it necessary to go to the limits of my knowledge. I had still several reserve facts, classified in the Encyclopædia under the heads, Geology, Administration, and Finance. I had established my position as a superior person with an intuitive knowledge of Prince Edward Island. If the Encyclopædia itself had walked into the kitchen arm in arm with the Classical Dictionary, she could not have been more impressed. At least, that is the way I like to think she felt. It is the way I feel under similar circumstances.

One watches the Superior Person leading a conversation with the admiration due to Browning's Hervé Riel, when,

> As its inch of way were the wide
> sea's profound,

he steered the ship in the narrow channel. It is well, however, for one who undertakes such feats to make sure that he really has an inch of way; it is none too much.

In these days it is so easy for one to get a supply of ready-made knowledge that it is hard to keep from

applying it indiscriminately. We make incursions into our neighbor's affairs and straighten them out with a ruthless righteousness which is very disconcerting to him, especially when he has never had the pleasure of our acquaintance till we came to set him right. There is a certain modesty of conscience which would perhaps be more becoming. It comes only with the realization of practical difficulties. I like the remark of Sir Fulke Greville in his account of his friend, Sir Philip Sydney. Speaking of his literary labors he says: "Since my declining age it is true I had for some years more leisure to discover their imperfections than care and industry to mend them, finding in myself what all men complain of: that it is more easy to find fault, excuse, or tolerate, than to examine or reform."

The idea that we know what a person ought to do, and especially what he ought not to do, before we know the person or how he is situated, is one dear to the mind of the Doctrinaire. If his mind did not naturally work that way he would not be a Doctrinaire. He is always inclined to put duty before the pleasure of finding out what it is all about. In this way he becomes overstocked with a lot of unrelated duties, for which there is no home consumption, and which he endeavors to dump on the foreign market. This makes him unpopular.

I am not one of those who insist that everybody should mind his own business; that is too harsh a doctrine. One of the rights and privileges of a good neighbor is to give neighborly advice. But there is a corresponding right on the part of the advisee, and that is to take no more of the advice than he thinks is good for him. There is one thing that a man knows

about his own business better than any outsider, and that is how hard it is for him to do it. The adviser is always telling him how to do it in the finest possible way, while he, poor fellow, knows that the paramount issue is whether he can do it at all. It requires some grace on the part of a person who is doing the best he can under extremely difficult circumstances to accept cheerfully the remarks of the intelligent critic.

Persons who write about the wild animals they have known are likely to be contradicted by persons who have been acquainted with other wild animals, or with the same wild animals under other circumstances. How much more difficult is it to give an exhaustive and correct account of that wonderfully complex creature, man.

One whose business requires him to meet large numbers of persons who are all in the same predicament, is in danger of generalizing from a too narrow experience. The teacher, the charity-worker, the preacher, the physician, the man of business, each has his method of professional classification. Each is tempted to forget that he is not in a position from which he can survey human nature in its entirety. He only sees one phase endlessly repeated. The dentist, for example, has special advantages for character study, but he should remember that the least heroic of his patients has moments when he is more blithe and debonair than he has ever seen him.

It takes an unusually philosophical mind to make the necessary allowances for its own limitations. If you were to earn your daily bread at the Brooklyn Bridge, and your sole duty was to exhort your fellow men to "step lively," you would doubtless soon come

to divide mankind into three classes, namely: those who step lively, those who do not step lively, and those who step too lively. If Aristotle himself were to cross the bridge, you would see nothing in the Peripatetic Philosopher but a reprehensible lack of agility.

At the railway terminus there is an office which bears the inscription, "Lost Articles." In the midst of the busy traffic it stands as a perpetual denial of the utilitarian theory that all men are governed by enlightened self-interest. A very considerable proportion of the traveling public can be trusted regularly to forget its portable property.

The gentleman who presides over the lost articles has had long experience as an alienist. He is skeptical as to the reality of what is called mind. So far as his clients are concerned, it is notable for its absence. To be confronted day after day by the absent-minded, and to listen to their monotonous tale of woe, is disenchanting. It is difficult to observe all the amenities of life when one is dealing with the defective and delinquent classes.

When first I inquired at the Lost Article window, I was received as a man and brother. There was even an attempt to show the respect due to one who may have seen better days. I had the feeling that both myself and my lost article were receiving individual attention. I left without any sense of humiliation. But the third time I appeared I was conscious of a change in the atmosphere. A single glance at the Restorer of Lost Articles showed me that I was no longer in his eyes a citizen who was in temporary misfortune. I was classified. He recognized me as a rounder. "There he is again," he said to himself. "Last time it

was at Rockingham Junction, this time it is probably on the Saugus Branch; but it is the same old story, and the same old umbrella."

What hurt my feelings was that nothing I could say would do any good. It would not help matters to explain that losing articles was not my steady occupation, and that I had other interests in life. He would only wearily note the fact as another indication of my condition. "That's the way they all talk. These defectives can never be made to see their conduct in its true light. They always explain their misfortunes by pretending that their thoughts were on higher things."

The Doctrinaire when he gets hold of a good thing never lets up on it. His favorite idea is produced on all occasions. It may be excellent in its way, but he sings its praises till we turn against it as we used to do in the Fourth Reader Class, when we all with one accord turned against "Teacher's Pet." Teacher's Pet might be dowered with all the virtues, but we of the commonality would have none of them. We chose to scoff at an excellence that insulted us.

The King in "Hamlet" remarked,

"There lives within the very flame
of love
A kind of wick, or snuff, that will
abate it;
And nothing is at a like goodness
still;
For goodness, growing to a
pleurisy,
Dies in his own too-much."

The Doctrinaire can never realize the fatal nature of the "too-much." If a little does good, he is sure that more will do better. He will not allow of any abatements or alleviations; we must, if we are to keep on good terms with him, be doing the whole duty of man all the time. He will take our own most cherished principles and turn them against us in such an offensive manner that we forget that they are ours. He argues on the right side with such uncompromising energy that we have to take the wrong side to maintain our self-respect.

If there is one thing I believe in, it is fresh air. I like to keep my window open at night, or better still to sleep under the stars. And I was glad to learn from the doctors that this is good for us. But the other day I started on a railway journey with premonitory signs of catching cold. An icy blast blew upon me. I closed the car window. A lady instantly opened it. I looked to see what manner of person she was. Was she one who could be touched by an illogical appeal? or was she wholly devoted to a cause?

It needed but a glance to assure me that she was a Doctrinaire, and capable only of seeing the large public side of the question. What would it avail for me to say, "Madam, I am catching cold, may I close the window?"

"Apostate man!" she would reply, "did I not hear you on the platform of the Anti-Tuberculosis Association plead for free and unlimited ventilation without waiting for the consent of other nations? Did you not appear as one who stood four-square 'gainst every wind that blows, and asked for more? And now, just because you are personally inconvenienced, you prove recreant to the Cause. Do you know how many

cubic feet of fresh air are necessary to this car?"

I could only answer feebly, "When it comes to cubic feet I am perfectly sound. I wish there were more of them. What troubles me is only a trifling matter of two linear inches on the back of my neck. Your general principle, Madam, is admirable. I merely plead for a slight relaxation of the rule. I ask only for a mere pittance of warmed-over air."

Perhaps the most discouraging thing about the Doctrinaire is that while he insists upon a high ideal, he is intolerant of the somewhat tedious ways and means by which the ideal is to be reached. With his eye fixed on the Perfect, he makes no allowance for the imperfectness of those who are struggling toward it. There is a pleasant passage in Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity" in which I find great comfort: "That which the Gospel of Christ requireth is the perpetuity of virtuous duties, not the perpetuity of exercise or action, but disposition perpetual, and practise as often as times and opportunities require. Just, valiant, liberal, temperate, and holy men, are they which *can* whensoever they will, and will whensoever they *ought*, execute whatever their several perfections impart. If virtues did always cease when they cease to work, there would be nothing more pernicious to virtue than sleep."

The judicious Hooker was never more judicious than in making this observation. It is a great relief to be assured that in this world, where there are such incessant calls upon the moral nature, it is possible to be a just, valiant, liberal, temperate, and holy man, and yet get a good night's sleep.

But your Doctrinaire will not have it so. His hero retains his position only during good behavior,

which means behaving all the time in an obviously heroic manner. It is not enough that he should be to "true occasion true," he must make occasions to show himself off.

Now it happens that in the actual world it is not possible for the best of men to satisfy all the demands of their fidgety followers. In the picture of the battle between St. George and the dragon, the attitude of St. George is all that could be desired. There is an easy grace in the way in which he deals with the dragon that is greatly to his credit. There is a mingling of knightly pride and Christian resignation over his own inevitable victory, that is charming.

St. George was fortunate in the moment when he had his picture taken. He had the dragon just where he wanted him. But it is to be feared that if some one had followed him with a kodak, some of the snap-shots might have been less satisfactory. Let us suppose a moment when the dragon

> Swinges the scaly horror of his
> folded tail.

It is a way that dragons have when they are excited. And what if that moment St. George dodged. Would you criticise him harshly for such an action? Would it not be better to take into consideration the fact that under such circumstances his first duty might not be to be statuesque?

When in the stern conflict we have found a champion, I think we owe him some little encouragement. When he is doing the best he can in a very difficult situation, we ought not to blame him

because he does not act as he would if there were no difficulties at all. "Life," said Marcus Aurelius, "is more like wrestling than dancing." When we get that point of view we may see that some attitudes that are not graceful may be quite effective. It is a fine thing to say,—

> "Dare to be a Daniel,
> Dare to stand alone,
> Dare to have a purpose true
> And dare to make it known."

But if I had been a Daniel and as the result of my independent action had been cast into the den of lions, I should feel as if I had done enough in the way of heroism for one day, and I should let other people take their turn. If I found the lions inclined to be amiable, I should encourage them in it. I should say, "I beg your pardon. I do not mean to intrude. If it's the time for your afternoon nap, don't pay any attention to me. After the excitement that I've had where I came from, I should like nothing better than to sit down by myself in the shade and have a nice quiet day of it."

And if the lions were agreeable, I should be glad. I should hate to have at this moment a bland Doctrinaire look down and say, "That was a great thing you did up there, Daniel. People are wondering whether you can keep it up. Your friends are getting a mite impatient. They expected to hear by this time that there was something doing down there. Stir 'em up, Daniel! Stir 'em up!"

Perhaps at this point some fair-minded reader may say, "Is there not something to be said in favor of the Doctrinaire? Is he not, after all, a very useful character? How could any great reform be pushed through without his assistance?"

Yes, dear reader, a great deal may be said in his favor. He is often very useful. So is a snow-plough, in midwinter, though I prefer a more flexible implement when it comes to cultivating my early peas.

There is something worse than to be a Doctrinaire who pursues an ideal without regard to practical consideration; it is worse to be a Philistine so immersed in practical considerations that he doesn't know an ideal when he sees it. If the choice were between these two I should say, "Keep on being a Doctrinaire. You have chosen the better part." But fortunately there is a still more excellent way. It is possible to be a practical idealist pursuing the ideal with full regard for practical considerations. There is something better than the conscience that moves with undeviating rectitude through a moral vacuum. It is the conscience that is related to realities. It is a moral force operating continuously on the infinitely diversified materials of human life. It feels its way onward. It takes advantage of every incident, with a noble opportunism. It is the conscience that belongs to the patient, keen-witted, open-minded, cheery "men of good will," who are doing the hard work of the world.

III

Christmas and the Literature of Disillusion



"What makes the book so cross?" asked the youngest listener, who had for a few minutes, for lack of anything better to do, been paying some slight attention to the reading that was intended for her elders.

It was a question which we had not been bright enough to ask. We had been plodding on with the vague idea that it was a delightful book. Certainly the subject was agreeable. The writer was taking us on a ramble through the less frequented parts of Italy. He had a fine descriptive power, and made us see the quiet hill towns, the old walls, the simple peasants, the white Umbrian cattle in the fields. It was just the sort of thing that should have brought

peace to the soul; but it didn't.

The author had the trick of rubbing his subject the wrong way. Everything he saw seemed to suggest something just the opposite. When every prospect pleased, he took offense at something that wasn't there. He was himself a favored man of leisure, and could go where he pleased and stay as long as he liked. Instead of being content with a short Pharisaic prayer of thanksgiving that he was not as other men, he turned to berate the other men, who in New York were, at that very moment, rushing up and down the crowded streets in the frantic haste to be rich. He treated their fault as his misfortune. Indeed, it was unfortunate that the thought of their haste should spoil the serenity of his contemplation. His fine sense for the precious in art led him to seek the untrodden ways. He indulged in bitter gibes at the poor taste of the crowd. In some far-away church, just as he was getting ready to enjoy a beautifully faded picture on the wall, he caught sight of a tourist. He was only a mild-mannered man with an apologetic air, as one who would say, "Let me look, too. I mean no harm."

It was a meek effort at appreciation, but to the gentleman who wrote the book it was an offense. Here was a spy from "the crowd," an emissary of "the modern." By and by the whole pack would be in full cry and the lovely solitude would be no more. Then the author wandered off through the olives, where under the unclouded Italian sky he could see the long line of the Apennines, and there he meditated on the insufferable smoke of Sheffield and Pittsburg.

The young critic was right, the author was undoubtedly "cross." In early childhood this sort of thing is well understood, and called by its right

name. When a small person starts the day in a contradictory mood and insists on taking everything by the wrong handle,—he is not allowed to flatter himself that he is a superior person with a "temperament," or a fine thinker with a gift for righteous indignation. He is simply set down as cross. It is presumed that he got up the wrong way, and he is advised to try again and see if he cannot do better. If he is fortunate enough to be thrown into the society of his contemporaries, he is subjected to a course of salutary discipline. No mercy is shown to "cross-patch." He cannot present his personal grievances to the judgment of his peers, for his peers refuse to listen. After a while he becomes conscious that his wrath defeats itself, as he hears the derisive couplet:—

"Johnny's mad.
And I am glad."

What's the use of being unpleasant any longer if it only produces such unnatural gayety in others. At last, as a matter of self-defense, he puts on the armor of good humor, which alone is able to protect him from the assaults of his adversaries.

But when a person has grown up and is able to express himself in literary language, he is freed from these wholesome restraints. He may indulge in peevishness to his heart's content, and it will be received as a sort of esoteric wisdom. For we are simple-minded creatures, and prone to superstition. It is only a few thousand years since the alphabet was invented, and the printing-press is still more recent. There is still a certain Delphic mystery about the printed page which imposes upon the imagination. When we sit down with a book, it is

hard to realize that we are only conversing with a fellow being who may know little more about the subject in hand than we do, and who is attempting to convey to us not only his life-philosophy, but also his aches and pains, his likes and dislikes, and the limitations of his own experience. When doleful sounds come from the oracle, we take it for granted that something is the matter with the universe, when all that has happened is that one estimable gentleman, on a particular morning, was out of sorts when he took pen in hand.

At Christmas time, when we naturally want to be on good terms with our fellow men, and when our pursuit of happiness takes the unexpectedly genial form of plotting for their happiness, the disposition of our favorite writers becomes a matter of great importance to us. A surly, sour-tempered person, taking advantage of our confidence, can turn us against our best friends. If he has an acrid wit he may make us ashamed of our highest enthusiasms. He may so picture human life as to make the message "Peace on earth, good will to men" seem a mere mockery.

I have a friend who has in him the making of a popular scientist, having an easy flow of extemporaneous theory, so that he is never closely confined to his facts. One of his theories is that pessimism is purely a literary disease, and that it can only be conveyed through the printed page. In having a single means of infection it follows the analogy of malaria, which in many respects it resembles. No mosquito, no malaria; so no book, no pessimism. Of course you must have a particular kind of mosquito, and he must have got the infection somewhere; but that is his concern, not yours. The

important thing for you is that he is the middleman on whom you depend for the disease. In like manner, so my friend asserts, the writer is the middleman through whom the public gets its supply of pessimism.

I am not prepared to give an unqualified assent to this theory, for I have known some people who were quite illiterate who held very gloomy views. At the same time it seems to me there is something in it.

When an unbookish individual is in the dumps, he is conscious of his own misery, but he does not attribute it to all the world. The evil is narrowly localized. He sees the dark side of things because he is so unluckily placed that that alone is visible, but he is quite ready to believe that there is a bright side somewhere.

I remember several pleasant half-hours spent in front of a cabin on the top of a far western mountain. The proprietor of the cabin, who was known as "Pat," had dwelt there in solitary happiness until an intruder came and settled near by. There was incompatibility of temper, and a feud began. Henceforth Pat had a grievance, and when a sympathetic traveler passed by, he would pour out the story of his woes; for like the wretched man of old he meditated evil on his bed against his enemy. And yet, as I have said, the half-hours spent in listening to these tirades were not cheerless, and no bad effects followed. Pat never impressed me as being inclined to misanthropy; in fact, I think he might have been set down as one who loved his fellow men, always excepting the unlucky individual who lived next to him. He never imputed the sins of this particular person to Humanity. There was always a sunny margin of good humor around

the black object of his hate. In this respect Pat was angry and sinned not. After listening to his vituperative eloquence I would ride on in a hopeful frame of mind. I had seen the worst and was prepared for something better. It was too bad that Pat and his neighbor did not get on better together. But this was an incident which did not shut out the fact that it was a fine day, and that some uncommonly nice people might live on the other side of the range.

But if Pat had possessed a high degree of literary talent, and had written a book, I am sure the impression would have been quite different. Two loveless souls, living on top of a lonely mountain, with the pitiless stars shining down on their futile hate! What theme could be more dreary. After reading the first chapter I should be miserable.

"This," I should murmur, "is Life. There are two symbolic figures,—Pat and the Other. The artist, with relentless sincerity, refuses to allow our attention to be distracted by the introduction of any characters unconnected with the sordid tragedy. Here is human nature stripped of all its pleasant illusions. What a poor creature is man!"

Pat and his neighbor, having become characters in a book, are taken as symbols of humanity, just as the scholastic theologians argued in many learned volumes, that Adam and Eve, being all that there were at the time, should be treated as "all mankind," at least for purposes of reprobation.

The author who is saddest when he writes takes us at a disadvantage. He may assert that he is only telling us the truth. If it is ugly, that is not his fault. He pictures to us the thing he sees, and declares that if

we could free ourselves from our sentimental preference for what is pleasing we should praise him for his fidelity.

In all this the author is well within his rights. But if he prefers unmitigated gloom in his representations of life, we on our part have the right of not taking him too seriously. Speaking of disillusion, two can play at that game. We must get over our too romantic attitude toward literature. We must not exaggerate the significance of what is presented to us, and treat that which is of necessity partial as if it were universal. When we are presented with a poor and shabby world, peopled only with sordid self-seekers, we need not be unduly depressed. We take the thing for what it is, a fragment. We are not looking directly at the world, but only at so much of it as has been mirrored in one particular mind. The mirror is not very large, and there is an obvious flaw in it which more or less distorts the image. Still let us be thankful for what is set before us, and make allowance for the natural human limitations. In this way one can read almost any sincere book, not only with profit, but with a certain degree of pleasure.

Let us remember that only a very small amount of good literature falls within Shelley's definition of poetry as "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds." For these rare outpourings of joyous, healthy life we are duly thankful. They are to be received as gifts of the gods, but we must not expect too many of them. Even the best minds often leave no record of their happiest moments, while they become garrulous over what displeases them. The cave of Adullam has always been the most prolific literary centre. Every man who has a grievance is fiercely impelled to self-

expression. He is not content till his grievance is published to the unheeding world. And it is well that it is so. We should be in a bad way if it were not for these inspired Adullamites who prevent us from resting in slothful indifference to evil.

Most writers of decided individuality are incited by a more or less iconoclastic impulse. There is an idol they want to smash, a conventional lie which they want to expose. It is the same impulse which moves almost every right-minded citizen, once or twice in his life, to write a letter of protest to the newspaper. Things are going wrong in his neighborhood, and he is impatient to set them right.

There are enough real grievances, and the full expression of them is a public service. But the trouble is that any one who develops a decided gift in that direction is in danger of becoming the victim of his own talent. Eloquent fault-finding becomes a mannerism. The original grievance loses its sharp outlines; it, as it were, passes from the solid to the gaseous state. It becomes vast, pervasive, atmospheric. It is like the London fog, enveloping all objects, and causing the eyes of those who peer through it to smart.

This happened, in the last generation, to Carlyle and Ruskin, and in a certain degree to Matthew Arnold. Each had his group of enthusiastic disciples who responded eagerly to their master's call. They renounced shams or machine-made articles or middle-class Philistinism as the case might be. They went in for sincerity, or Turner, or "sweetness and light," with all the ardor of youthful neophytes. And it was good for them. But after a while they became, if not exactly weary in well-doing, at least a little

weary of the unintermittent tirades against ill-doing. They were in the plight of the good Christian who goes to church every Sunday only to hear the parson rebuke the sins of the people who are not there. The man who dated his moral awakening from "Sartor Resartus" began to find the "Latter Day Pamphlets" wear on his nerves. It is good to be awakened; but one does not care to have the rising bell rung in his ears all day long. One must have a little ease, even in Zion.

Ruskin had a real grievance, and so had Matthew Arnold. It is too bad that so much modern work is poorly done; and it is too bad that the middle-class Englishman has a number of limitations that are quite obvious to his candid friends,—and that his American cousin is no better.

But when all this has been granted, why should one talk as if everything were going to the dogs? Why not put a cheerful courage on as we work for better things? Even the Philistine has his good points, and perhaps may be led where he cannot be driven. At any rate, he is not likely to be improved by scolding.

I am beginning to feel the same way even about Ibsen. Time was when he had an uncanny power over my imagination. He had the wand of a disenchanter. Here, I said, is one who has the gift of showing us the thing as it is. There is not a single one of these characters whom we have not met. Their poor shifts at self-deceit are painfully familiar to us. In the company of this keen-eyed detective we can follow human selfishness and cowardice through all their disguises. The emptiness of conventional respectabilities and pieties and the futility of the spasmodic attempts at heroism are obvious enough.

It was an eclipse of my faith in human nature. The eclipse was never total because the shadow of the book could not quite hide the thought of various men and women whom I had actually known.

After a while I began to recover my spirits. Why should I be so depressed? This is a big world, and there is room in it for many embodiments of good and evil. There are all sorts of people, and the existence of the bad is no argument against the existence of quite another sort.

Let us take realism in literature for what it is and no more. It is, at best, only a description of an infinitesimal bit of reality. The more minutely accurate it is, the more limited it must be in its field. You must not expect to get a comprehensive view through a high-powered microscope. The author is severely limited, not only by his choice of a subject, but by his temperament and by his opportunities for observation. He is doing us a favor when he focuses our attention upon one special object and makes us see it clearly.

It is when the realistic writer turns philosopher and begins to generalize that we must be on our guard against him. He is likely to use his characters as symbols, and the symbolism becomes oppressive. There are some businesses which ought not to be united. They hinder healthful competition and produce a hateful monopoly. Thus in some states the railroads that carried coal also went into the business of coal-mining. This has been prohibited by law. It is held that the railroad, being a common carrier, must not be put into a position in which it will be tempted to discriminate in favor of its own products. For a similar reason it may be argued that it is dangerous

to allow the dramatist or novelist to furnish us with a "philosophy of life." The chances are that, instead of impartially fulfilling the duties of a common carrier, he will foist upon us his own goods, and force us to draw conclusions from the samples of human nature he has in stock. I should not be willing to accept a philosophy of life even from so accomplished a person as Mr. Bernard Shaw. It is not because I doubt his cleverness in presenting what he sees, but because I have a suspicion that there are some very important things which he does not see, or which do not interest him.

It is really much more satisfactory for each one to gather his life philosophy from his own experience rather than from what he reads out of a book, or from what he sees on the stage. "The harvest of a quiet eye" is, after all, more satisfying than the occasional discoveries of the unquiet eye that seeks only the brilliantly novel.

The inevitable discrepancy between the literary representations of life and life itself has been the cause of the ancient feud between teachers of morals and writers of fiction. Because of this Plato would banish poets from his Republic and the Puritans would exclude novelists and play-actors from their conventicles. But it is curious to observe how the character of the complaints varies with the change in literary fashions. The argument of serious persons against works of fiction used to be that they put too many romantic ideas into the reader's head.

This was the charge made by Mrs. Tabitha Tenney, one of the first of the long line of American novelists. She wrote a novel entitled "Female Quixotism; exhibited in the Romantic Opinions and Extravagant

Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon." The work was addressed "to all Columbian Young Ladies who read Novels and Romances." To these young ladies the solemn advice of Mrs. Tabitha Tenney was, "Don't."

Miss Dorcasina was certainly a distressing example. "At the age of three years this child had the misfortune to lose an excellent mother, whose advice would have pointed out to her the plain, rational path of life, and prevented her imagination from being filled with the airy delusions and visionary dreams of love and raptures, darts, fire and flames, with which the indiscreet writers of that fascinating kind of books denominated Novels fill the heads of artless young girls to their great injury, and sometimes to their utter ruin." Her father allowed her to indulge her fancy, "never considering their dangerous tendency to a young, inexperienced female mind." The various calamities into which Miss Dorcasina Sheldon fell may be imagined by those who have not the patience to search for them upon the printed pages. Her parting words to those who had the guardianship of female minds had great solemnity. "Withhold from their eyes the pernicious volumes, which while they convey false ideas of life, and inspire illusory expectations, will tend to keep them ignorant of everything worth knowing; and which if they do not eventually render them miserable may at least prevent them from becoming respectable. Suffer not their imaginations to be filled with ideas of happiness, particularly in the connubial state, which can never be realized."

If Mrs. Tabitha Tenney were to come to life in our day I think she would hardly feel like warning the Columbian young ladies against the effect of works of fiction in exaggerating the happiness of life in

general or of the connubial state in particular. The young ladies are much more in danger of having their spirits depressed by the painstaking representation of miseries they are never likely to experience. The gloomy views of average human nature which once were conscientiously expounded by "painful preachers" are now taken up by painful play-wrights and story-tellers. Under the spell of powerful imaginations it is quite possible to see this world as nothing but a vale of tears.

Happily there is always a way of escape for those who are quick-witted enough to think of it in time. When fiction offers us only arid actualities, we can flee from it into the romance of real life.

I sympathize with a young philosopher of my acquaintance. He took great joy in a Jack-o-lantern. The ruddy countenance of the pumpkin was the very picture of geniality. Good-will gleamed from the round eyes, and the mouth was one luminous smile. No wonder that he asked the privilege of taking it to bed with him. He shouted gleefully when it was left on the table.

But when he was alone Mr. Jack-o-lantern assumed a more grimly realistic aspect. There was something sinister in the squint of his eye, and uncanny in the way his rubicund nose gleamed. On entering the room a little while after I found it in darkness.

"What has become of your Jack-o-lantern?"

"He was making faces at me. I looked at him till I 'most got scared, so I just got up and blew him out."

I commended my philosopher for his good sense. It is the way to do with Jack-o-lanterns when they

become unmannerly.

And I believe that it is the best way to treat distressing works of the imagination, though I know that their authors, who take themselves solemnly, will resent this advice.

We can't blow out a reality, just because it happens to make us miserable. We must face it. It is a part of the discipline of life. But a book or a play has no such right to domineer over us. Our own imagination has the first rights in its own home. If some other person's imagination intrudes and "makes faces," it is our privilege to blow it out.

IV

The Ignominy of Being Grown-up



As I have already intimated, my greatest intellectual privilege is my acquaintance with a philosopher. He is not one of those unsocial philosophers who put their best thoughts into books to be kept in cold storage for posterity. My Philosopher is eminently social, and is conversational in his method. He belongs to the ancient school of the Peripatetics, and the more rapidly he is moving the more satisfactory is the flow of his ideas.

He is a great believer in the Socratic method. He feels that a question is its own excuse for being. The proper answer to a question is not a stupid affirmation that would close the conversation, but another question. The questions follow one another with extreme rapidity. He acts upon my mind like an air pump. His questions speedily exhaust my small stock of acquired information. Into the mental vacuum thus produced rush all sorts of irrelevant ideas, which we proceed to share. In this way there comes a sense of intellectual comradeship which one does not have with most philosophers.

For four years my Philosopher has been interrogating Nature, and he has not begun to exhaust the subject. Though he has accumulated a good deal of experience, he is still in his intellectual prime. He has not yet reached the "school age," which in most persons marks the beginning of the senile decay of the poetic imagination.

In my walks and talks with my Philosopher I have often been amazed at my own limitations. Things which are so easy for him are so difficult for me. Particularly is this the case in regard to the more fundamental principles of philosophy. All philosophy, as we know, is the search for the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. These words represent only the primary colors of the moral spectrum. Each one is broken up into any number of secondary colors. Thus the Good ranges all the way from the good to eat to the good to sacrifice one's self for; the Beautiful ascends from the most trifling prettiness to the height of the spiritually sublime; while the True takes in all manner of verities, great and small. In comparing notes with my Philosopher I am chagrined at my own color-blindness. He recognizes so many superlative excellences to which I am stupidly oblivious.

In one of our walks we stop at the grocer's, I having been asked to fill the office of domestic purveyor. It is a case where the office has sought the man, and not the man the office. Lest we forget, everything has been written down so that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein,—baking-powder and coffee and a dozen eggs, and last and least, and

under no circumstances to be forgotten, a cake of condensed yeast. These things weigh upon my spirits. The thought of that little yeastcake shuts out any disinterested view of the store. It is nothing to me but a prosaic collection of the necessaries of life. I am uncheered by any sense of romantic adventure.

Not so with my Philosopher. He is in the rosy dawn of expectation. The doors are opened, and he enters into an enchanted country. His eyes grow large as he looks about him. He sees visions of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful in all their bewildering, concrete variety. They are in barrels and boxes and paper bundles. They rise toward the sky in shelves that reach at last the height of the gloriously unattainable. He walks through the vales of Arcady, among pickles and cheeses. He lifts up his eyes wonderingly to snowy Olympus crowned with Pillsbury's Best. He discovers a magic fountain, not spurting up as if it were but for a moment, but issuing forth with the mysterious slowness that befits the liquefactions of the earlier world. "What is that?" he asks, and I can hardly frame the prosaic word "Molasses."

"Molasses!" he cries, gurgling with content; "what a pretty word!" I hadn't thought about it, but it is a pretty word, and it has come straight down from the Greek word for honey.

He discovers works of art. Surprising pictures, glowing in color, are on the walls. These are cherubs rioting in health, smiling old men, benignant matrons, radiant maidens, all feasting on nectar and ambrosia. Here and there is a pale ascetic, with a look of agony on his emaciated face.

"What makes that man feel so bad?" asks my

Philosopher, anxious to extract a story from the picture. It seems like an inadequate explanation to say that he is only a martyr to his own folly in not getting the right kind of breakfast food.

For one thing, my Philosopher has a great physical advantage over me when it comes to seeing things. His eyes are only two feet ten inches from the ground, while mine are some five feet ten. Three feet do not count for much when we are considering astronomical distances, but they make a great difference in the way things seem. There is a difference in the horizon line, and the realm of mystery begins much nearer. There is no disenchanting bird's-eye view of the counter with all things thereon. There are alluring glimpses of piled-up wealth.

There particularly is the land of the heart's desire in a square glass-covered case. There are many beautiful things in the store to be admired from below; but one supremely beautiful and delectable object is the crowning glory of the place.

The artist who spends his life in attempting to minister to dull adult sensibilities never created a masterpiece that gave such pure delight as the candy dog which my Philosopher spies.

"See the dog!" It is, indeed, a miracle of impressionist art. It is not like the dogs that bite. It offers itself alluringly to the biter,—or rather to one who would leisurely absorb it. Even now there is a vagueness of outline that suggests the still vaguer outlines it will have when it comes into the possession of a person of taste.

This treasure can be procured for one copper cent. My Philosopher feels that it is a wise investment, and I thoroughly agree with him. However much the necessaries of life may have advanced in price, the prime luxuries are still within the reach of all. We still have much to be thankful for when with one cent we can purchase a perfect bliss.

It is all so interesting and satisfactory that we feel that the visit to the grocer's has been a great success. It is only when we are halfway home that we remember the yeastcake.

Sometimes my Philosopher insists upon my telling him a story. Then I am conscious of my awkwardness. It is as if my imagination were an old work-horse suddenly released from its accustomed tip-cart and handed over to a gay young knight who is setting forth in quest of dragons. It is blind of both eyes, and cannot see a dragon any more, and only shies, now and then, when it comes to a place where it saw one long ago. There is an element of insincerity in these occasional frights which does not escape the clear-eyed critic. It gets scared at the wrong times, and forgets to prance when prancing is absolutely demanded by the situation.

When my Philosopher tells a story, it is all that a story ought to be. There is no labored introduction, no tiresome analysis. It is pure story, "of imagination all compact." Things happen with no long waits between the scenes. Everything is instantly moulded to the heart's desire.

"Once upon a time there was a little boy. And he wanted to be a cock-a-doodle-doo. So he was a cock-a-doodle-doo. And he wanted to fly up into the sky. So he did fly up into the sky. And he wanted to get wings and a tail. So he did get some wings and a tail."

Physiologists tell us that the trouble with advancing years is that the material which in youth went directly to building up the vital organs is diverted to the connective tissue, so that after a time there gets to be too much connective tissue and too little to connect. When the imagination is in its first freshness, a story is almost without connective tissue. There seems hardly enough to hold it together. There is nothing to take our minds off the successive happenings. If it is deemed desirable that a little boy should be a cock-a-doodle-doo, then he is a cock-a-doodle-doo. All else is labor and sorrow.

As a listener my Philosopher is no less successful than as an improviser. He is not one of those fickle hearers whose demands for some new thing are the ruination of literary art. When he finds something beautiful it is a joy to him forever, and its loveliness increases with each repetition. In a classic tale he is quick to resent the slightest change in phraseology. There is a just severity in his rebuke when, in order to give a touch of novelty, I mix up the actions appropriate to the big bear, the little bear, and the middle-sized bear. This clumsy attempt at originality by means of a willful perversion of the truth offends him. If a person can't be original without making a mess of it, why try to be original at all?

With what keen expectancy he awaits each inevitable word, and how pleased he is to find that everything

comes out as he expected! He reserves his full emotion for the true dramatic climax. If a great tragedian could be assured of having such an appreciative audience, how pleasant would be the pathway of art! The tragedy of Cock Robin reaches its hundredth night with no apparent falling off in interest. It is followed as only the finest critic will listen to the greatest actor of an immortal drama. He is perfectly familiar with the text, and knows where the thrills come in. When the fatal arrow pierces Cock Robin's breast, it never fails to bring an appreciative exclamation, "He's killed Cock Robin!"

Of the niceties of science my Philosopher takes little account, yet he loves to frequent the Museum of Natural History, and is on terms of intimacy with many of the stuffed animals. He walks as a small Adam in this Paradise, giving to each creature its name. His taste is catholic, and while he delights in the humming birds, he does not therefore scorn the less brilliant hippopotamus. He has no repugnance to an ugliness that is only skin deep. He reserves his disapprobation for an ugliness that seems to be a visible sign of inner ungraciousness. The small monkeys he finds amusing; but he grows grave as he passes on to the larger apes, and begins to detect in them a caricature of their betters. When we reach the orang-outang he says, "Now let's go home." Once outside the building, he remarks, "I don't like mans when they're not made nice." I agree with him; for I myself am something of a misanthropoidist.

There is nothing unusual about my Philosopher. He is not a prodigy or a genius. He is what a normal

human being is at the age of four, when he is still in possession of all his faculties. Having eyes he sees with them, and having ears he hears with them. Having a little mind of his own, he uses it on whatever comes to hand, trying its edge on everything, just as he would try a jackknife if I would let him. He wants to cut into things and see what they are made of. He wants to try experiments. He doesn't care how they come out; he knows they will come out some way or other. Having an imagination, he imagines things, and his imagination being healthy, the things he imagines are very pleasant. In this way he comes to have a very good time with his own mind. Moreover, he is a very little person in a very big world, and he is wise enough to know it. So instead of confining himself to the things he understands, which would not be enough to nourish his life, he manages to get a good deal of pleasure out of the things he does not understand, and so he has "an endless fountain of immortal drink."

What becomes of these imaginative, inquisitive, myth-making, light-hearted, tender-hearted, and altogether charming young adventurers who start out so gayly to explore the wonder-world?

The solemn answer comes, "They after a while are grown-up." Did you ever meditate on that catastrophe which we speak of as being "grown-up"? Habit has dulled our perception of the absurd anti-climax involved in it. You have only to compare the two estates to see that something has been lost.

You linger for a moment when the primary school has been dismissed. For a little while the stream of youthful humanity flows sluggishly as between the

banks of a canal, but once beyond the school limits it returns to nature. It is a bright, foaming torrent. Not a moment is wasted. The little girls are at once exchanging confidences, and the little boys are in Valhalla, where the heroes make friends with one another by indulging in everlasting assault and battery, and continually arise "refreshed with blows." There is no question about their being all alive and actively interested in one another. All the natural reactions are exhibited in the most interesting manner.

Then you get into a street car, invented by an ingenious misanthropist to give you the most unfavorable view possible of your kind. On entering you choose a side, unless you are condemned to be suspended in the middle. Then you look at your antagonists on the opposite side. What a long, unrelenting row of humanity! These are the grown-ups. You look for some play of emotion, some evidence of curiosity, pleasure, exhilaration, such as you might naturally expect from those who are taking a little journey in the world.

Not a sign of any such emotion do you discern. They are not adventuring into a wonder-world. They are only getting over the ground. One feels like putting up a notice: "Lost, somewhere on the road between infancy and middle age, several valuable faculties. The finder will find something to his advantage."

I have no quarrel with Old Age. It should be looked upon as a reward of merit to be cheerfully striven for.

> Old Age hath still his honor and his toil.

Nor do I object to the process of growth. It belongs to the order of nature. Growing is like falling,—it is all right so long as you keep on; the trouble comes when you stop.

What I object to is the fatalistic way in which people acquiesce in the arrest of their own mental development. Adolescence is exciting. All sorts of things are happening, and more are promised. Life rushes on with a sweet tumult. All things seem possible. It seems as if a lot of the unfinished business of the world is about to be put through with enthusiasm. Then, just as the process has had a fair start, some evil spirit intervenes and says: "Time's up! You've grown all you are to be allowed to. Now you must settle down,—and be quick about it! No more adolescing; you are adults!"

Poor adults! Nature seems to have been like an Indian giver, taking away the gifts as soon as they are received,—

> The gifts of morn
> Ere life grows noisy and slower-
> footed thought
> Can overtake the rapture of the
> sense.

The extinction of the early poetry and romance which gave beauty to the first view of these realities has often been accomplished by the most deliberate educational processes. There are two kinds of education,—that which educates, and that which eradicates. The latter is the easier and the more ancient method.

Wordsworth writes:—

Oh, many are the poets that are
sown
By Nature, men endowed with
highest gifts,
The vision and the faculty divine.

But with this broad-sowing of the highest gifts it is astonishing how few come to maturity. I imagine that the Educational Man with the Hoe is responsible for a good deal of the loss. In his desire for clean culture he treats any sproutings of the faculty divine as mere weeds, if they come up between the rows.

If the Educational Man with the Hoe is to be feared, the Educational Man with the Pruning Shears is an equal menace.

There is an art, once highly esteemed, called topiary. The object of topiary when carried to excess was to take a tree, preferably a yew tree, and by careful trimming to make it look like something else, say a peacock standing under an umbrella. Curious effects could be produced in this way, leafy similitudes of birds and animals could be made so that the resemblance was almost as striking as if they had been cut out of gingerbread.

The object of educational topiary is to take a child, and, by careful pruning away of all his natural propensities, make of him a miniature grown-up. It is an interesting art, for it shows what can be done; the only wonder is why any one should want to do it. If you would see this art at its best, turn to Miss Edgeworth's "Frank," a book much admired in its

day. Frank, to begin with, was a very likable little boy. If he was not made of the "sugar and spice and all things nice" that little girls are made of, he had all the more homely miscellaneous ingredients that little boys are made of. The problem of the careful father and mother was to take Frank and reduce him in the shortest possible time to the adult frame of mind. To this end they sought out any vagrant fancies and inquisitive yearnings and wayward adventurousness, and destroyed them. This slaughter of the innocents continued till Frank's mind was a model of propriety.

It was hard work, but there was a satisfaction in doing it thoroughly. The evening meal was transformed into a purgatorial discipline, and as he progressed from course to course Frank's mind was purified as by fire.

Here is one occasion. There was a small plumcake, and Frank was required to divide it so that each of the five persons present should have a just share. Frank began to cut the cake, but by a mistake cut it into six pieces instead of five.

This miscarriage of justice sent dismay into the hearts of his parents. They felt that he was at the parting of the ways. It was a great moral crisis, in which his character was to be revealed. What would Frank do with that sixth piece of cake? Perhaps—horrible thought!—he might eat it. From this crime he was saved only to fall into the almost equal sin of unscientific charity. In order to save trouble he proposed to give the extra piece to his father, and when questioned he could give no better reason than that he thought his father liked cake.

"'What right have you to give it to any of us? You were to judge about the size of the pieces, and you

were to take care that we each have our just share. But you are going to give one of us twice as much as any of the others.'"

Justice triumphed. "Frank took the trouble to think, and he then cut the spare bit of cake into five equal parts, and he put these parts by the side of the five large pieces and gave one of the large and one of the small pieces to each person, and he then said: 'I believe I have divided the cake fairly now.' Everybody present said 'yes,' and everybody looked carefully at each of the shares, and there appeared exactly the same quantity in each share. So each person took a share, and all were satisfied."

That is to say, all were satisfied except Frank's mother. She was afraid that the family meal had not yielded its full educational value.

"'My dear Frank,' said his mother, 'as you have divided the cake so fairly, let us see how you will divide the sugar that was upon the top of the cake, and which is now broken and crumbled to pieces in the plate. We all like sugar; divide it equally amongst us.'

"'But this will be very difficult to do, mamma, because the pieces of sugar are of such different sizes and shapes. I do not know how I shall ever divide it exactly. Will it do if I do not divide it quite exactly, ma'am?'

"'No,' said his mother, 'I beg you will divide it quite exactly.'"

Frank gathered his fragments into five little mounds, and after carefully measuring their height, declared that they were equal.

"'They are of the same length and breadth, I acknowledge,' said the father, 'but they are not of the same thickness.'

"'Oh, thickness! I never thought of thickness.'

"'But you should have thought of it,' said his father."

At last Frank, seeing that there was no other way to satisfy the demands of distributive justice, went to the closet, and brought forth a pair of scales. "By patiently adding and taking away, he at last made them each of the same weight, and everybody was satisfied with the accuracy of the division."

This habit of accuracy, developed in the family meals, saved them from the temptation of wasting time in flippant conversation.

Miss Edgeworth's most striking plea for grown-up-edness versus childish curiosity was elaborated in her story of Frank and his orrery. Frank had read of an orrery in which the motions of the planets were shown by ingenious mechanism. Being a small boy, he naturally desired to make one.

For several days he almost forgot about his Roman History and Latin Grammar and the "Stream of Time," so absorbed was he in making his orrery. He had utilized his mother's tambour frame and knitting needles; and wires and thread held together his planets, which were made of worsted balls. It was a wonderful universe which Frank had created—as many great philosophers before him had created theirs—out of the inner consciousness. When it had been constructed to the best of his ability, the only question was, would his universe work,—would his planets go singing around the sun, or was there to be

a crash of worlds? Frank knew no other way than to put it to the test of action, and he invited the family to witness the great experiment. He pointed out with solemn joy his worsted earth, moon, and planets, and predicted their revolutions according to his astronomy.

But the moment his father's eye rested upon it all, he saw that it was absurd.

He "pointed out the defects, the deficiencies, the mistakes,—in one word, the absurdities,—but he did not use that offensive word, for he was tender of Frank's feelings for his wasted work."

"'Well, papa,' said Mary, 'what is your advice to Frank?'

"'My first advice to you, Frank,' said his father, 'and indeed the condition upon which I now stay and give up my time to you is that you abide steadily by whatever resolution you now make, either quite to finish or quite to give up this orrery. If you choose to finish it you must give up for some time reading anything entertaining or instructive; you must give up arithmetic and history.'

"'And the "Stream of Time" and the lists?' said Mary.

"'Everything,' said his father, 'to the one object of making an orrery,—and when made as well as you possibly could with my assistance make it, observe that it will only be what others have repeatedly made before.... Master Frank will grow older, and when or why or how he made this orrery few will know or care, but all will see whether he has the knowledge which is necessary for a man and a gentleman to possess. Now choose, Frank.'"

Frank seized the orrery. "'Mary, bring your work basket, my dear,' said he.

"And he pulled off one by one, deliberately, the worsted sun, moon, earth, and stars, and threw them into the work basket which Mary held. Mary sighed, but Frank did not sigh. He was proud to give his father a proof of his resolution, and when he looked around he saw tears, but they were tears of pleasure, in his mother's eyes.

"'Are you sure yet that I can keep to my good resolution?'

"'I am not quite sure, but this is a good beginning,' said his father."

The aim of all this discipline was to make Frank just like his father. Now I am not saying anything against Frank's father. He was a truly good man, and well-to-do. Still, there have always been so many just like him that it would not have done much harm if Frank had been allowed to be a little different.

I cannot help thinking how different was a contemporary of his, Michael Faraday. Faraday had not any one to look after him in his youth, and to keep him from making unnecessary experiments. When he felt like making an experiment he did so. There was no one to tell him how it would come out, so he had to wait to see how it did come out. In this way he wasted a good deal of time that might have been spent in learning the things that every educated Englishman was expected to know, and he found out a good many things that the educated Englishman did not know,—this caused him to be always a little out of the fashion.

He let curiosity get the better of him, and when he was quite well on in years he would try to do things with pith-balls and electric currents, just as Frank tried to do things with worsted balls before his father showed him the folly of it. Some of his experiments turned out to be very useful, but most of them did not. Some of them only proved that what people thought they knew was not so. Faraday seemed to be just as much interested in this kind as in the other. He never learned to mind only his own business, but was always childishly inquisitive, so he never was so sure of things as was Frank's father.

Still, it takes all sorts of people to make up a world, and if a person cannot be like Frank's father, it is not so bad to be like Faraday.

Frank's father would have been shocked at Faraday's first introduction to the problems of metaphysical speculation. "I remember," he says, "being a great questioner when young." And one of his first questions was in regard to the seat of the soul. The question was suggested in this way. Being a small boy, and seeing the bars of an iron railing, he felt called upon to try experimentally whether he could squeeze through. The experiment was only a partial success. He got his head through, but he could not get it back. Then the physical difficulty suggested the great metaphysical question, "On which side of the fence am I?"

Frank's father would have said that that was neither the time nor the place for such speculation, and that the proper way to study philosophy was to wait till

one could sit down in a chair and read it out of a book. But to Faraday the thoughts he got out of a book never seemed to be so interesting as those which came to him while he was stuck in the fence.

When Frank learned a few lines of poetry, he asked to be allowed to say them to his father.

"'I think,' said his mother, 'your father would like you to repeat them if you understand them all, but not otherwise.'"

Of course that was the end of any nonsense in that direction. If Frank was kept away from any poetry he could not altogether understand, he would soon be grown-up, so that he would not be tempted by any kind of poetry any more than his father was.

I am sure Frank's father would have disapproved of the way my Philosopher takes his poetry. His favorite poem is "A frog he would a-wooing go,"—especially the first quatrain. His analysis is very defective; he takes it as a whole. He likes the mystery of it, the quick action, the hearty, inconsequent refrain:—

A frog he would a-wooing go—
Heigh ho! says Rowley—
Whether his mother would let him
or no—
With a rowly-powly, gammon and
spinach.
Heigh ho! says Anthony
Rowley.

This to him is poetry. Everything is lifted above the commonplace. The frog is no cousin to the vulgar hop-toad, whose presence in the garden, in spite of his usefulness, is an affront. He is a creature of

romance; he is going a-wooing,—whatever that may be;—he only knows that it is something dangerous. And what a glorious line that is,—

> Whether his mother would let him
> or no.

It thrills him like the sound of a trumpet. And great, glorious Anthony Rowley! It needs no footnote to tell about him. It is enough to know that Rowley is a great, jovial soul, who, when the poetry is going to his liking, cries, "Heigh ho!"—and when Rowley cries, "Heigh ho!" my Philosopher cries, "Heigh ho!" too, just to keep him company. And so the poem goes on "with a rowly-powly, gammon and spinach," and nobody knows what it means. That's the secret.

Now I should not wish my Philosopher always to look upon "A frog he would a-wooing go" as the high-water mark of poetical genius; but I should wish him to bring to better poetry the same hearty relish he brings to this. The rule should be,—

> Now good digestion wait on
> appetite,
> And health on both.

When I see persons who upon the altar of education have sacrificed digestion, appetite, and health, I cannot but feel that something is wrong. I am reminded of an inscription which I found on a tombstone in a Vermont churchyard:—

> Here lies cut down like unripe fruit
> The only son of Amos Toot.

* * * * *

Behold the amazing alteration
Brought about by inoculation:
The means employed his life to
save
Hurled him, untimely, to the grave.

Sometimes the good housewife has chosen carefully every ingredient for her cake, and has obeyed conscientiously the mandates of the cookbook. She has with Pharisaic scrupulosity taken four eggs and no more, and two cups of sugar, and two teaspoonfuls of sifted flour, and a pinch of baking powder, and a small teacupful of hot water. She has beaten the eggs very light and stirred in the flour only a little at a time. She has beaten the dough and added granulated sugar with discretion. She has resisted the temptation to add more flour when she has been assured that it would not be good for the cake. And then she has placed the work of her hands in a moderately hot oven, after which she awaits the consummation of her hopes. In due time she looks into the moderately hot oven, and finds only a sodden mass. Something has happened to the cake.

Such accidents happen in the best of attempts at education. The outcome is disappointing. The ingredients of the educational cake are excellent, and an immense amount of faithful work has been put into it, but sometimes it does not rise. As the old-fashioned housekeeper would say, it looks "sad."

It is easier to find fault with the result than to point out the remedy; but so long as such results frequently happen, the business of the home and the school is full of fascinating and disconcerting uncertainty. One thing is obvious, and that is that it is no more safe for the teacher than for the preacher to "banish

Nature from his plan." Of course the reason we tried to banish Nature in the first place was not because we bore her any ill-will, but only because she was all the time interfering with our plans.

The fact is that Nature is not very considerate of our grown-up prejudices. She does not set such store by our dearly bought acquirements as we do. She is more concerned about "the process of becoming" than about the thing which we have already become. She is quite capable of taking the finished product upon which we had prided ourselves and using it as the raw material out of which to make something else. Of course this tries our temper. We do not like to see our careful finishing touches treated in that way.

Especially does Nature upset our adult notions about the relations between teaching and learning. We exalt the function of teaching, and seem to imagine that it might go on automatically. We sometimes think of the teacher as a lawgiver, and of the learner as one who with docility receives what is graciously given.

But the law to be understood and obeyed is the law of the learner's mind, and not that of the teacher's. The didactic method must be subordinated to the vital. Teaching may be developed into a very neat and orderly system, but learning is apt to be quite disorderly. It is likely to come by fits and starts, and when it does come it is very exciting.

Those who have had the good fortune in mature life to learn something have described the experience as being quite upsetting. They have found out something that they had never known before, and

the discovery was so overpowering that they could not pay attention to what other people were telling them.

Kepler describes his sensations when he discovered the law of planetary motion. He could not keep still. He forgot that he was a sober, middle-aged person, and acted as if he were a small boy who had just got the answer to his sum in vulgar fractions. Nobody had helped him; he had found it out for himself; and now he could go out and play. "Let nothing confine me: I will indulge my sacred ecstasy. I will triumph over mankind.... If you forgive me, I rejoice; if you are angry, I cannot help it." In fact, Kepler didn't care whether school kept or not.

Now in the first years of our existence we are in the way of making first-rate discoveries every day. No wonder that we find it so hard to keep still and to listen respectfully to people whose knowledge is merely reminiscent. Above all, it is difficult for us to keep our attention fixed on their mental processes when our minds make forty revolutions to their one.

There, for instance, is the Alphabet. Because the teacher told us about it yesterday she is grieved that we do not remember what she said. But so many surprising things have happened since then that it takes a little time for us to make sure that it's the same old Alphabet this morning that we had the other day. She is the victim of preconceived ideas on the subject, but our minds are open to conviction. Most of the letters still look unfamiliar; but when we really do learn to recognize Big A and Round O, we are disposed to indulge our sacred ecstasy and to "triumph over mankind."

If the teacher be a sour person who has long ago

completed her education, she will take this occasion to chide us for not paying attention to a new letter that is just swimming into our ken. If, however, she is fortunate enough to be one who keeps on learning, she will share the triumph of our achievement, for she knows how it feels.

There is coming to be a greater sympathy between teachers and learners, as there is a clearer knowledge of the way the mind grows. But even yet one may detect a certain note of condescension in the treatment of the characteristics of early childhood. The child, we say, has eager curiosity, a myth-making imagination, a sensitiveness to momentary impressions, a desire to make things and to destroy things, a tendency to imitate what he admires. His mind goes out not in one direction, but in many directions. Then we say, in our solemn, grown-up way: "Why, that is just like Primitive Man, and how unlike Us! It has taken a long time to transform Primitive Man into Us, but if we start soon enough we may eradicate the primitive things before they have done much harm."

What we persistently fail to understand is that in these primitive things are the potentialities of all the most lasting satisfactions of later life.

Browning tells us how the boy David felt when he watched his sheep:—

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep;
And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and the sky:
And I laughed,—"Since my days are ordained to be passed with my flocks,
Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and the rocks,
Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know."

All this is natural enough, we say, in a mere boy,—but he will outgrow it. But now and then some one does not outgrow it. He has become a man, and yet in his mind fancies are still rife. They throng upon him and crave expression. The things he sees, the people he meets, are all symbols to him, just as the one eagle which "wheeled slow as in sleep" was to the shepherd lad the symbol of a great unknown world. That which he sees of the actual world seems still to him only a strip "'twixt the hill and the sky,"—all the rest he imagines. He fills it with vivid color and absorbing life. He peoples it with his own

thoughts.

We call such a person a poet; and if he is a very good poet, we call him a genius; and, in order to do him honor, we pretend that we cannot understand him, and we employ people to explain him to us. We treat his works as alcohol is treated in the arts. It is, as they say, "denaturized," that is, something is put into it that people don't like, so that they will not drink it "on the sly!"

Yet all the time the plain fact is that the poet is simply a person who is still in possession of all his early qualities. Wordsworth gave away the secret. He is a boy who keeps on growing. He is

> One whose heart the holy forms
> Of young imagination have kept pure.

Where others see a finished world, he sees all things as manifestations of a free power.

> Even in their fixed and steady lineaments
> He traced an ebbing and a flowing mind,
> Expression ever varying.

This ebbing and flowing mind with its ever-changing expression is the charm of early childhood. It is the charm of all genius as well. Turn to Shelley's "Skylark." The student of Child Psychology never found more images chasing one another through the mind. The fancies follow one another as rapidly as if Shelley had been only four years old. Frank's father would have been troubled at the lack of business-like

grasp of the subject. What was the skylark like? It was

> Like an unbodied joy whose race is
> just begun.

Then again, it was

> Like a star of heaven
> In the broad daylight.

It was

> Like a poet hidden
> In the light of thought.

It was like a high-born maiden, like a rose, like a glow-worm, like vernal showers. The mind wanders off and sees visions of purple evenings and golden lightnings and white dawns and rain-awakened flowers. These were but hints of the reality of feeling, for

> All that ever was
> Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy
> music doth surpass.

We know of religion—or at least we have often been told—that it is found in the purest form in the heart of a child, and that it consists in nurture and development of this early grace through all the years that may be allotted. The same thing is true of all that concerns the ideal life. The artist, the reformer, the inventor, the poet, the man of pure science, the really fruitful and original man of affairs,—these are the incorrigibles. They refuse to accept the hard-and-fast rules that are laid down for them. They insist upon finding time and room for activities that are

not conceived of as tasks, but as the glorious play of their own faculties. They are full of a great, joyous impulse, and their work is but the expression of this impulse. They somehow have time for the unexpected. They see that which

> Gives to seas and sunset skies
> The unspent beauty of surprise.

The world is in their eyes ever fresh and sparkling. Life is full of possibilities. They see no reason to give up the habit of wonder. They never outgrow the need of asking questions, though the final answers do not come.

When to a person of this temper you repeat the hard maxims of workaday wisdom, he escapes from you with the smiling audacity of a truant boy. He is one who has awakened right early on a wonderful morning. There is a spectacle to be seen by those who have eyes for it. He is not willing out of respect for you to miss it. He hears the music, and he follows it. It is the music of the

> Olympian bards who sung
> Divine ideas below,
> Which always find us young,
> And always keep us so.

V

Christmas and the Spirit of Democracy



"Times have changed," said old Scrooge, as he sat by my fireside on Christmas Eve. "The Christmas Carol" had been read, as our custom was, and the children had gone to bed, so that only Scrooge and I remained to watch the dying embers.

"Times have changed, and I am not appreciated as I was in the middle of the last century. People don't seem to be having so good a time. You remember the Christmas when I was converted? What larks! Up to that time I had been 'a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner.' Those were the very words that described me. Then the Christmas Spirit took possession of me and—presto! change! All at once I became a new creature. I began to hurry about, giving all sorts of things to all sorts of people. You remember how I scattered turkeys over the neighborhood, shouting, 'Here's the

turkey! Hello! Whoop! How are you! Merry Christmas!' And then I sat down and chuckled over my generosity till I cried. I was having the time of my life. You see, I hadn't been used to that sort of thing, and it went to my head.

"And how grateful everybody was! They took everything in the spirit in which it was offered, and asked no questions. Everywhere there was an outstretched hand and a fervent God-bless-you for every gift. Nobody twitted me about the past. I was all at once elevated to the position of an earthly Providence.

"Talk of fun! Was there ever such a practical joke as to scare Bob Cratchit within an inch of his life and then raise his salary before he could say Jack Robinson! You should have seen him jump! How the little Cratchits shouted for joy! And when the thing was written up, all Anglo-Saxondom was smiling through its tears and saying: 'That's just like us. God bless us, every one.'

"But it's different now. Something has got into the Christmas Spirit. Doing good doesn't seem such a jolly thing as it once was, and you can't carry it off with a whoop and hello. People are getting critical. In these days a charitable shilling doesn't go so far as it used to, and doesn't buy nearly so many God-bless-you's. You complain of the rise in the price of the necessaries of life. It isn't a circumstance to the increase in the cost of luxuries like benevolence. Almost every one looks forward to the time when he can afford to be generous. And when he is generous he likes to feel generous, and to have other people sympathize with him. It's only human nature. A man can't be thinking about himself all the time; he gets

that tired feeling that your scientific people in these days call altruism. It is an inability to concentrate his mind on his own concerns. In spite of himself his thoughts wander off to other people's affairs, and he has an impulse to do them good. Now in my day it was the easiest thing in the world to do good. The only thing necessary was to feel good-natured, and there you were! Nowadays, the way of the benefactor is hard. It's so difficult that I understand you actually have Schools of Philanthropy."

Scrooge shrugged his shoulders and seemed to shrivel at the thought of these horrible institutions.

"Just fancy," he continued, "how I should have felt on that blessed Christmas night, if, instead of starting off as an amateur angel, feeling my wings growing every moment, I had been compelled to prepare for an entrance examination. I suppose I should have been put with the backward pupils whose early education had been neglected, and should have had to learn the A B C's of charity. School of Philanthropy! Ugh! And in the holidays, too!

"I have been visiting some elderly gentlemen who have had something of my experience with the Spirit of Christmas. Like me, they were converted somewhat late in life. They never were in as bad a way as I was, for I did business, you may remember, in a narrow street with quite sordid surroundings, while they were financiers in a large way. Yet I suppose that they, too, were 'squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinners,' though nobody had the courage to tell them so. Then they got tired of clutching, and their hearts warmed and their hands relaxed and they began to give. Never was such giving known before. It was a perfect

deluge of beneficence. A mere catalogue of the gifts would make a Christmas carol of itself.

"But would you believe it, they never have got the fun out of it that I got when I filled the cab full of turkeys and set out for Camden town. The old Christmas feeling seems to have been chilled. The public has grown critical. Instead of dancing for joy, it looks suspiciously at the gifts and asks: 'Where did they get them?' It has been so impressed by the germ theory of disease that it foolishly fears that even money may be tainted. It's a preposterous situation. Generosity is a drug on the market, and gratitude can't be had at any reasonable price."

"Yes," I said, "you are quite right, public sentiment has changed. Gratitude is not so easily won as it was in your day, and it takes longer to transform a clutching, covetous old sinner into a serviceable philanthropist. But I do not think, Scrooge, that the Christmas Spirit has really vanished. He is only a little chastened and subdued by the Spirit of Democracy."

"I don't see what Democracy has to do with it," said Scrooge. "I'm sure that nobody ever accused me of being an aristocrat. What I am troubled about is the decay of gratitude. If I give a poor fellow a shilling, I ought to be allowed the satisfaction of having him remove his hat and say, 'Thank'ee, sir,' and he ought to say it as if he meant it. The heartiness of his thanksgiving is half the fun. It makes one feel good all over."

"But," I answered, "if the fellow happens to have a good memory he may recall the fact that yesterday you took two shillings from him, and he may think that the proper response to your sudden act of

generosity is, 'Where's that other shilling?' That's what the Spirit of Democracy puts him up to. It's not so polite, but you must admit that it goes right to the point."

"I don't like it," said Scrooge.

"I thought you wouldn't. There are a great many people who don't like it. It's a twitting on facts that takes away a good deal of the pleasure of being generous."

"I should say it did," grumbled Scrooge. "It makes you feel mean just when you are most sensitive. Just think how I should have felt if, when I gave Bob Cratchit a dig in the waistcoat and told him that I had raised his salary, he had taken the opportunity to ask for back pay. It would have been most inopportune."

"You owed it to him, didn't you?"

"Yes, I suppose I did, if you choose to put it that way. But Bob wouldn't have put it that way; he wouldn't take such liberties. He took what I gave him; and when I gave him more than he expected, he was all the happier, and so was I. That's what made it all seem so nice and Christmasy. We were not thinking about rights and duties; it was all free grace."

"Now, Scrooge, you are getting at the point. There is no concealing the fact that the Spirit of Democracy makes himself unpleasant sometimes. He breaks up the old pleasant relations existing not only between the Lords and the Commons, but between you and Bob Cratchit. Man is naturally a superstitious creature, and is prone to worship the first thing that comes in his way. When a poor fellow sees a person

who is better off than himself, he jumps to the conclusion that he is a better man, and bows down before him, as before a wonder-working Providence. When this Providence smiles upon him, he is glad, and receives the bounty with devout thankfulness. It is what the old theologians used to call 'an uncovenanted mercy.'

"All this is very pleasant to one who can sign himself by the grace of God king, or president of a coal company, or some such thing as that. The gratification extends to all the minor grades of greatness as well. The great man is ordained to give as it pleases him and the little men to receive with due meekness. The great man is always the man who has something. I suppose, Scrooge, that in your busy life, first scraping money together and then dispensing it in your joyous Christmasy way, you have not had much time for general reading or even for listening to sermons?"

"I have always attended Divine Service since my conversion," answered Scrooge, piously; "as for listening—"

"What I was going to say was that if you had attended to such matters, you must have noticed how much of the literature of good-will is devoted to the praise of the Blessed Inequalities. How the changes are rung on the Strong and the Weak, the Wise and the Ignorant, the Rich and the Poor; especially the Poor, who form the hub of the philanthropic universe. Nobody seems to meet another on the level. Everybody is either looking up or looking down, and they are taught how to do it. I remember attending the annual meeting of the Society for the Relief of Indigent Children. The indigent children

were first fed and then insulted by a plethoric gentleman, who addressed to them a long discourse on indigence and the various duties that it entailed. And no one of the children was allowed to throw things at the speaker. They had all been taught to look grateful.

"Now these inequalities do exist, and so long as they exist all sorts of helpful offices have place. The trouble is that good people are all the time doing their best to make the inequalities permanent. You have heard how divines have interpreted the text, 'The poor ye have always with you.' The good old doctrine has been that the relation between those who have not and those who have should be that of one-sided dependence. The Ignorant must depend upon the Wise, the Weak upon the Strong, the Poor upon the Rich. As for the black, yellow, and various parti-colored races, they must depend upon the White Man, who gayly walks off with their burdens without so much as saying 'By your leave.'

"Now it is against this whole theory, however beautifully or piously expressed, that the protest has come. The Spirit of Democracy is a bold iconoclast, and goes about smashing our idols. He laughs at the pretensions of the Strong and the Wise and the Rich to have created the things they possess. They are not the masters of the feast. They are only those of us who have got at the head of the line, sometimes by unmannerly pushing, and have secured a place at the first table. We are not here by their leave, and we may go directly to the source of supplies. They are not benefactors, but beneficiaries. The Spirit of Democracy insists that they shall know their place. He rebukes even the Captains of Industry, and when they answer insolently, he suggests that they be

reduced to the ranks. Even toward bishops and other clergy his manner lacks that perfect reverence that belonged to an earlier time; yet he listens to them respectfully when they talk sense.

"It is this spirit that plays the mischief with many of the merry old ways of doing good. To scatter turkeys or colleges among a multitude of gratefully dependent folks is the very poetry of philanthropy. But to satisfy the curiosity of an independent citizen as to your title to these things is a different matter. The more independent people are, the harder it is to do good to them. They are apt to have their own ideas of what they want."

"It's a pity, then, to have them so independent," said Scrooge; "it spoils people to get above their proper station in life."

"Ah! there you are," I answered; "I feared it would come to that. With all your exuberant good-will you haven't altogether got beyond the theory that has come down from the time when the first cave-dweller bestowed on his neighbor the bone he himself didn't need, and established the pleasant relation of benefactor and beneficiary. It gave him such a warm feeling in his heart that he naturally wanted to make the relation permanent. First Cave-dweller felt a little disappointed next day when Second Cave-dweller, instead of coming to him for another bone, preferred to take his pointed stick and go hunting on his own account. It seemed a little ungrateful in him, and First Cave-dweller felt that it would be no more than right to arrange legislation in the cave so that this should not happen again.

"Christian Charity is a very beautiful thing, but sometimes it gets mixed up with these ideas of the

cave-dwellers. Sometimes it perpetuates the very evils that it laments. Perhaps you won't mind my reading a bit from a homily of St. Augustine on this very subject. St. Augustine was a man who was a good many centuries ahead of his time. He begins his argument by saying: 'All love, dear brethren, consists in wishing well to those who are loved.' This seems like a harmless proposition. It is the sort of thing you might hear in a sermon and think no more about. But St. Augustine goes to the root of the matter, and asks what it means to wish well to the person you are trying to help. He comes to the conclusion that if you really wish him well, you must wish him to be at least as well off and as well able to take care of himself as you are. The first thing you know, you are wishing to have him reach a point where he will not look up to you at all. 'There is a certain friendliness by which we desire at one time or another to do good to those we love. But how if there be no good that we can do? We ought not to wish men to be wretched that we may be enabled to practice works of mercy. Thou givest bread to the hungry, but better were it that none hungered and thou hadst none to give to. Thou clothest the naked; oh, that all men were clothed and that this need existed not! Take away the wretched, and the works of mercy will be at an end, but shall the ardor of charity be quenched? With a truer touch of love thou lovest the happy man to whom there is no good office that thou canst do; purer will that love be and more unalloyed. For if thou hast done a kindness to the wretched, perhaps thou wishest him to be subject to thee. He was in need, thou didst bestow; thou seemest to thyself greater because thou didst bestow than he upon whom it was bestowed. Wish him to be thine equal.'

"There, Scrooge, is the text for the little Christmas sermon that I should like to preach to you and to your elderly wealthy friends who feel that they are not so warmly appreciated as they once were. 'Wish him to be thine equal'—that is the test of charity. It is all right to give a poor devil a turkey. But are you anxious that he shall have as good a chance as you have to buy a turkey for himself? Are you really enthusiastic about so equalizing opportunities that by and by you shall be surrounded by happy, self-reliant people who have no need of your benefactions?

"Do you know, Scrooge, I sometimes think that it is time for some one to write a new 'Christmas Carol,' a carol that will make the world know how people are feeling and some of the best things they are doing in these days. It should be founded on Justice and not on Mercy. We should feed up Bob Cratchit and put some courage into him, and he should come to you and ask a living wage not as a favor, but as a right. And you, Scrooge, would not be offended at him, but you would sit down like a sensible man and figure it out with him. And when the talk was over, you wouldn't feel particularly generous, and he wouldn't feel particularly grateful; it would be simple business. But you would like each other better, and the business would seem more worth while.

"And then, when you went out with the Spirit of Christmas, you would ask the Spirit of Democracy to go with you and show you the new things that are most worth seeing. He wouldn't wait for the night, for the cheeriest things would be those that go on during business hours. He would show you some sights to make your heart glad. He would show you vast numbers of persons who have got tired of the

worship of the Blessed Inequalities, and who are going in for the Equalities. They have a suspicion that there is not so much difference between the Great and the Small as has been supposed, and that what difference there is does not prevent a frank comradeship and a perfect understanding. They think it is better to work with people than to work for them. They think that one of the inalienable rights of man is the right to make his own mistakes and to learn the lesson from them without too much prompting. So they are a little shy of many of the more intrusive forms of philanthropy. But you should see what they are up to.

"The Spirit of Democracy will take you to visit a school that is not at all like the school you used to go to, Scrooge. The teacher has forgotten his rod and his rules and his airs of superiority. He is not teaching at all, so far as you can see. He is the centre of a group of eager learners, who are using their own wits and not depending on his. They are so busy observing, comparing, reasoning, and finding out things for themselves that he can hardly get in a word edgewise. And he seems to like it, though it is clear that if they keep on at this rate they will soon get ahead of their teacher.

"And the Spirit of Democracy will take you to a children's court, where the judge does not seem like a judge at all, but like a big brother who shows the boys what they ought to do and sees that they do it. He will take you to a little republic, where boys and girls who have defied laws that they did not understand are making laws of their own and enforcing them in a way that makes the ordinary citizen feel ashamed of himself. They do it all so naturally that you wonder that nobody had thought

of the plan before. He will take you to pleasant houses in unpleasant parts of the city, and there you will meet pleasant young people who are having a very good time with their neighbors and who are getting to be rather proud of their neighborhood. After you have had a cup of tea, they may talk over with you the neighborhood problems. If you have any sensible suggestion to make, these young people will listen to you; but if you begin to talk condescendingly about the Poor, they will change the subject. They are not philanthropists—they are only neighbors.

"I hope he may take you, Scrooge—this Spirit of Democracy—to some of the charity organizations I know about. I realize that you are prejudiced against that sort of thing, it seems so cold and calculating, compared with your impulsive way of doing good. And you will probably quote the lines about

> Organized charity scrimped and
> iced
> In the name of a cautious,
> statistical Christ.

"Never mind about the statistics; they only mean that these people are doing business on a larger scale than did the good people who could carry all the details in their heads. What I want you to notice is the way in which the scientific interest does away with that patronizing pity that was the hardest thing to bear in the old-time charities. These modern experts go about mending broken fortunes in very much the same way in which surgeons mend broken bones. The patient doesn't feel under any oppressive weight of obligation, he has given them such a good opportunity to show their skill. And the doctors have

caught the spirit, too. Instead of looking wise and waiting for people to come to them in the last extremity, they have enlisted in Social Service. You should see them going about opening windows, and forcing people to poke their heads out into the night air, and making landlords miserable by their calculations about cubic feet, and investigating sweat-shops and analyzing foodstuffs. It's their way of bringing in a Merry Christmas.

"And the Spirit of Democracy will take you to workshops, where you may see the new kind of Captain of Industry in friendly consultation with the new kind of Labor Leader. For the new Captain is not a chief of banditti, interested only in the booty he can get for himself, and the new Leader is not a conspirator waiting for a chance to plunge his knife into the more successful bandit's back. These two are responsible members of a great industrial army, and they realize their responsibility. They have not met to exchange compliments. They are not sentimentalists, but shrewd men of affairs who have met to plan a campaign for the common welfare. They don't take any credit for it, for they do not expect to give to any man any more than his due; yet there are a good many Christmas dinners involved in the cool, business-like consultation.

"Afterward, the Spirit of Democracy will take you to a church where the minister is preaching from the text, 'Ye are all kings and priests,' as if he believed it; and you will believe it too, and go on your way wondering at the many sacred offices in the world.

"You will hurry on from the church to shake hands with the new kind of politician. He is not the dignified 'statesman' you have read about and

admired afar off, who has every qualification for high office except the ability to get himself elected. This man knows the game of politics. He is not fastidious, and likes nothing better than to be in the thick of a scrimmage. He has not the scholar's scorn of 'the aggregate mind.' He thinks that it is a very good kind of mind if it is only rightly interpreted. He has the idea that what all of us want is better than what some few of us want, and that when all of us make up our minds to work together we can get what we want without asking anybody's leave. He thinks that what all of us want is fair play, and so he goes straight for that without much regard for special interests. It is a simple programme, but it's wonderful what a difference it makes.

"There never was a time, Scrooge, when the message of good-will was so widely interpreted in action, or when it took hold of so many kinds of men. Perhaps you wouldn't mind my reading another little bit from St. Augustine: 'Two are those to whom thou doest alms; two hunger, one for bread, the other for righteousness. Between these two famishing persons thou, the doer of the good work, art set. The one craves what he may eat, the other craves what he may imitate. Thou feedest the one, give thyself as a pattern to the other, so hast thou given to both. The one thou hast caused to thank thee for satisfying his hunger, the other thou hast made to imitate thee by setting him a worthy example.'

"It is this hunger for simple justice that is the great thing. And there are people who are giving their whole lives to satisfy it. What we need is to realize what it all means, and to get that joyous thrill over it that came to you when you found for the first time that life consisted not in getting, but in giving. It's a

wonderful giving, this giving of one's self, and people do appreciate it. When you have ministered to a person's self-respect, when you have contributed to his self-reliance, when you have inspired him to self-help, you have given him something. And you are conscious of it, and so is he, though you both find it hard to express in the old terms. All the old Christmas cheer is in these reciprocities of friendship that have lost every touch of condescension. We need some genial imagination to picture to us all the happiness that is being diffused by people who have come to look upon themselves not as God's almoners, but as sharers with others in the Common Good. I wish we had a new Dickens to write it up."

"If you are waiting for that, you will wait a long time," said Scrooge.

"Perhaps so, but the people are here all the same, and they are getting on with their work."

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