The Philosophy of Disenchantment

Edgar Saltus



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THE PHILOSOPHY OF DISENCHANTMENT

BY

EDGAR EVERTSON SALTUS

In Arkadien geboren sind wir Alle
Schiller



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THE PHILOSOPHY OF DISENCHANTMENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE GENESIS OF DISENCHANTMENT.

The trite and commonplace question of contentment and dissatisfaction is a topic which is not only of every-day interest, but one which in recent years has so claimed the attention of thinkers, that they have broadly divided mankind into those who accept life

off-hand, as a more or less pleasing possession, and those who resolutely look the gift in the mouth and say it is not worth the having.

Viewed simply as systems of thought, the first of these two divisions is evidently contemporaneous with humanity, while the second will be found to be of purely modern origin; for from the earliest times man, admittedly and with but few exceptions, has been ever accustomed to regard this world as the best one possible, and through nearly every creed and sect he has considered happiness somewhat in the light of an inviolable birthright.

Within the last half century, however, there has come into being a new school, which, in denying the possibility of any happiness, holds as first principle that the world is a theatre of misery in which, were the choice accorded, it would be preferable not to be born at all.

In stating that this view of life is of distinctly modern origin, it should be understood that it is so only in the systematic form which it has recently assumed, for individual expressions of discontent have been handed down from remote ages, and any one who cared to rummage through the dust-bins of literature would find material enough to compile a dictionary of pessimistic quotation.

For these pages but little rummaging will be attempted, but as the proper presentation of the subject demands a brief account of the ideas and opinions in which it was cradled, a momentary examination of general literature will not, it is believed, cause any after-reproach of time misspent.

To begin, then, with Greece, whose literature has precedence over all others, it will be remembered that in former days, when the citizen expended the greater part of his activity for the common good, the poets in like manner sang of national topics, the gods, the heroes, and the charms of love. There was, therefore, little opportunity for the expression of purely personal ideas, and the whole background of the poetry of antiquity is in consequence brilliant with optimistic effect. Nevertheless, here and there, a few complaints crop out from time to time. Homer, for instance, says that man is the unhappiest wight that ever breathed or strutted, and describes his ephemeral existence in a wail of gloomy hexameters.

Then, too, there is the touching Orphean distich, which runs:—

> "From thy smile, O Jove, sprang the gods,
> But man was born of thy sorrow."

Pindar in one of his graceful odes compared men to the shadows of a dream, while the familiar quotation, "Whom the gods love die young," comes to us straight from Menander.

With the peculiar melancholy of genius, that in those favored days seems more a presentiment than the expression of a general conception, Sophocles, in his last tragedy, says that not to be born at all is the greatest of all possible benefits, but inasmuch as man has appeared on earth, the very best thing he can do is to hurry back where he came from.

In spite, too, of the general tendency of thought, sentiments not dissimilar are to be found in Æschylus and Euripides, while something of this instinctive pessimism was expanded into a quaint and national

custom by the Thracians, who, according to Herodotus, met birth with lamentations, but greeted death with salvos and welcoming festivals.

With but few exceptions the early philosophers considered death not as a misfortune, but as an advantage. Empedocles taught that the sojourn on earth was one of vexatious torment, an opinion in which he was firmly supported by Heraclitus, and even Plato, whose general drift of thought was grandly optimistic, said in the "Apology," "If death is the withdrawal of every sensation, if it is like a sleep which no dream disturbs, what an incomparable blessing it must be! for let any one select a night passed in undisturbed and entire rest, and compare it with the other nights and days that have filled his existence, and then from his conscience let him answer how many nights and days he has known which have been sweeter and more agreeable than that. For my part I am sure that not the ordinary individual alone, but even the great King of Persia would find such days and nights most easy to enumerate."

The doctrine of Epicurus held, in substance, that the moment it was no longer possible to delight the senses death became a benefit, and suicide a crowning act of wisdom. The teaching of the Socratic school and its offshoots amounted, in brief, to the idea that the only admissible aim of life was the pursuit and attainment of absolute knowledge. Absolute knowledge, however, being found unattainable, the logical culmination of their doctrine was delivered by Hegesias, in Alexandria, in the third century before the Christian era. This disciple of Socrates argued that as there was a limit to the knowable, and happiness was a pure illusion, a

further prolongation of existence was useless. "Life seems pleasing only to the fool," he stated; "the wise regard it with indifference, and consider death just as acceptable." "Death," he added, "is as good as life; it is but a supreme renunciation in which man is freed from idle complaints and long deceptions. Life is full of pain, and the pangs of the flesh gnaw at the mind and rout its calm. In countless ways fate intercepts and thwarts our hopes. Contentment is not to be relied on, and even wisdom cannot preserve us from the treachery and insecurity of the perceptions. Since happiness, then, is intangible we should cease to pursue it, and take for our goal the absence of pain; this condition," he explained, "is best obtained in making ourselves indifferent to every object of desire and every cause of dislike, and above all to life itself. In any event," he concluded, "death is advantageous in this, it takes us not from blessings but from evil."[1]

This curious mixture of pessimism and theology was, it is said, delivered with such charm of persuasive grace and eloquence that several of his listeners put his ideas into instant practice, and that the city might be preserved from the contagion of suicide, King Ptolemy felt himself obliged to prevent this seductive misanthrope from delivering any further harangues.

Literature has the same tendency to repeat itself as history, and as the Romans took much of their culture and many of their ideas from Greece, the tone of their principal writers is only dissimilar to those already quoted in that with the fall of their religion, the decline of the empire and the universal intoxication of the senses, the pessimist element became somewhat accentuated. It would be an idle

task, however, to attempt to cite even a fraction of the cheerless distress which pervades the Roman classics, and it will perhaps suffice for the moment to note but a passage or two, which bear directly upon the subject.

Seneca, for instance, whose insight was as clear and whose understanding was as unclouded as any writer with whom the world is acquainted, sent his letters down the centuries freighted with such ideas as these: "Death is nature's most admirable invention." "There is no need to complain of particular grievances, for life in its entirety is lamentable." "No one would accept life were it not received in ignorance of what it is."

Pliny, also, is very quotable. "Nature's most pleasing invention," he says, "is brevity of life." And he adds, "No mortal is happy, for even if there is no other cause for discontent there is at least the fear of possible misfortune."

Then, too, Petronius, the poet of the Roman orgy, opening and closing his veins, toying with death, as with a last and supreme delight, is of familiar, if repulsive, memory.

English literature is naturally as well stocked with individual expressions of distaste for existence as that of Rome. The poets, nearly one and all, from Chaucer to Rossetti, have told their sorrow in a variety of more or less polished metre, and even Macpherson was careful, in dowering his century with another bard, to put thoughts into Ossian's verse which would not have been unfitting in a Greek chorus.

In speaking of the world, Chaucer had already said,

—

"Here is no home, here is but a
wilderness,"

when Sir Thomas Wyatt, enlarging on the theme, repeated,—

"Wherefore come death and let me dye."

The delicate muse of Samuel Fletcher found—

"Nothing's so dainty sweet, as lovely
melancholy,"

and Shakespeare's depressing lines on the value of life are familiar to every schoolboy.

Dryden wrote,—

"When I consider life, 't is all a cheat;
Yet, fooled with hope, men favour the
deceit,
Trust on and think to-morrow will repay;
To-morrow's falser than the former day."

All of which was afterwards summed up in the well-known line,—

"Man never *is* but always *to be* blessed,"

while Thomson noted—

... "all the thousand, nameless ills
That one incessant struggle render life."

Keats, and especially Byron, wrote stanza after stanza of enervating sadness. Moore's dear gazelle is nowadays a familiar comparison. Shelley's tremulous

sensibility forbade his finding any charm in life, and we none of us need to be reminded that Poe's soul was sorrow-laden.

But the poets are not alone in their tale of the deceptions of life; the moralists and essayists, too, have added their quota to the general budget, and it is not simply the value of life that has been questioned by many of the best writers; there has been also a certain surprise expressed that man should care to live at all. Indeed, the "I see no necessity" of the wit, to the beggar imploring aid that he might live, is the epigram of the thoughts of a hundred scholars.

In France, pessimism cannot be said to have been ever regarded otherwise than as an intellectual curiosity. The Frenchman, it is true, not infrequently lapses into a cynical indifference; yet the value of life is as a rule so evident to him, that he seldom vouchsafes more than a passing shrug to any theory of disparagement. In the first place, death, to which the hat is gravely raised, has never been in France a polite or welcome topic; moreover, French literature, while lawless enough in other respects, has left its readers generally unprepared to view the world as a fiasco, in which misery is the one immense success. The trouvères and troubadours sang to the mediæval châtelaine little else than the praise of love, with here and there the account of some combat, to show what they might do were they put to the test. Later, Villon told gently of the *neiges d'antan*, Ronsard aimed a dart or two at fate, and Rabelais's laugh was sometimes very near to tears; but, broadly speaking, the French asked of their writers little else than wit, —if they could not give them that, then should they hold their peace.

The delicate irony of Candide had, therefore, when appreciated, something almost novel in its savor; and, indeed, it may fairly be said that it was not until the blight of Byron had been cheerfully translated, that the French were in any measure prepared to understand Rolla and the pathetic beauties of De Musset's verse. Pascal, Helvetius, and other writers of desultory depression had of course already appeared. Maupertuis had found no difficulty in showing that life held more pain than pleasure, while Chamfort's conclusions on the same subject were as luminous as they were gloomy; and yet it is difficult to say that the gall with which these authors dashed their pages served otherwise than as a condiment to fresher and less flavored works. Baudelaire, the poet of boredom, praying for a new vice that should wrest life into some semblance of reality, was in consequence almost a novelty, and not a perfectly satisfactory one at that. It is therefore only within the last ten years or so that pessimism has in any wise attracted the notice of French thinkers, and the attention which has recently been paid to it is due partly to Leconte de Lisle, and partly to a surge of German thought.

During the eighteenth century the majority of the scholars who represented the culture of Germany were faithfully following the optimist theories of Leibnitz and Wolf. The doctrine that the world was the best one possible, supported as it was by official theology and strictly in accord with the deism of Pope and Paley, was very generally and unhesitatingly accepted. Indeed, there is no apparent reason why it should not have been. The Minnesingers doubtless had formulated some few complaints, but then these literary vagrants had already begun to form part of mythology, and

besides, poets are all more or less prone to discontent and voluble of sorrow. Beyond the classics of Greece and Rome there was, therefore, no precedent for pessimistic thought. German literature, strictly speaking, did not begin until Lessing's advent, and before that the theatre, with its Hans Wurst and its Pickleherring, had offered only a succession of the broadest farce.

The calm and quiet which the Germans then enjoyed was ruffled, if at all, only by some confused echoes of the *obiter dicta* which Voltaire's royal disciple was pleased to disseminate, but it is probable that the better part of this ferocious gayety was drowned in crossing the Rhine, and, in any event, it was too delicately pungent to do more than disturb the placid current of their thought.

Later, when Kant appeared, the effect of his philosophy was very much like a successful treatment of cataract on the eyes of the whole nation. "Happiness," he insisted in the "Kritik der Urtheilskraft," "has never been attained by man, for he is unable to find contentment in any possession or enjoyment, ... and were he called upon to fashion a system of happiness for his fellows he would be unable to do so, for happiness is in its essence intangible." "No one," he added elsewhere, "has a right conception of life who would care to prolong it beyond its natural duration, for it would then be only the continuation of an already tiresome struggle."

After this the teaching of Leibnitz slowly disappeared, and though a certain amount of optimism necessarily subsisted, the tendency of thought veered to the opposite direction. Fichte,

Kant's immediate successor, declared, in direct contradiction to Leibnitz, that this world was the worst one possible, and was only consoled by thinking he could raise himself by the aid of pure thought into the felicity of the "supersensible." "Men," he says, "in the vehement pursuit of happiness grasp at the first object which offers to them any prospect of satisfaction, but immediately they turn an introspective eye and ask, 'Am I happy?' and at once from their innermost being a voice answers distinctly, 'No, you are as poor and as miserable as before.' Then they think it was the object that deceived them, and turn precipitately to another. But the second holds as little satisfaction as the first.... Wandering then through life, restless and tormented, at each successive station they think that happiness dwells at the next, but when they reach it happiness is no longer there. In whatever position they may find themselves there is always another one which they discern from afar, and which but to touch, they think, is to find the wished delight, but when the goal is reached discontent has followed on the way and stands in haunting constancy before them."[2]

Schelling expressed himself more guardedly. As professional pantheist, he seemed to think that anything not rigidly vague and inaccessible was inconsistent with his philosophy. Still there was probably a secret revolt, some propelling impulse to deny his own syllogisms, and to bathe for once in some clear stream of common sense. In the "Nachtwachen," which he published under the pseudonym of Bonaventura, this incentive is evidently, though unsuccessfully, at work. It may be that the force of habit was too strong, but at any rate this rhapsody, which was intended to be a confession of the combat that he had waged with his belief, and

a recognition of the immedicable misery of life, brings with it something of that impression of delirium which Poe and Doré not infrequently suggest.

Nor was Hegel hostile to pessimism; he regarded it as an inevitable phase of universal evolution, and indeed its dawn as a science had then already broken.

Meanwhile the poets had not been idle. Herder and Schiller had already attested the bitterness of life to unreluctant ears, and the number of suicides that were directly traceable to the appearance of Werther and his sorrows was instructively large. This phase of sentimentalism, which immediately preceded the riotous rebirth of the Romantic school, was not without its influence on Heine's verse, and in some measure affected the literary tone of the day.

It would, however, be erroneous to suppose that the poets of this epoch were more agitated by the impression of universal worthlessness of life than were their classic predecessors. The distress of Werther, as that of Lara and of Rolla, was not the pain of suffering humanity; it was in each case merely the poet's complacent analysis of his own exceptional nature and personal grievances; it was the expression of the inevitable surprise of youth, which notes for the first time reality's unsuspected yet yawning indifference to the ideal, and the stubborn disaccord between aspiration and fact. It was indeed very beautiful and elegiac, and yet so fluent in its polished melancholy that somehow it did not at all times seem to have been really felt. In any case, it was not a theory of common woe, and lacked that clear conception of the universality of suffering,

which the less exalted minds of the philosophers had already signaled, but for which no one as yet had been able to suggest a remedy.

It was about this time that an action was being instituted against humanity by a young Italian, the Count Giacomo Leopardi, and the muffled discontent which for centuries had been throbbing through land and literature was raised by his verse into one clear note of eloquent arraignment.

Now, in most countries there is a provision which inhibits a judge from hearing a cause which is pleaded by one of his connections, for it is considered that the scales of justice are so delicately balanced, that their holder should be preserved from any biasing influence, however indirect; for much the same reason, there are few communities that permit a man to sit in judgment on his own case. Some knowledge of Leopardi himself, therefore, will be of service in deciding whether the verdict which he brought against the world should be accepted without appeal, or returned as vitiated by extraneous circumstances.

Leopardi passed a joyless boyhood at Recanti, one of those maddeningly monotonous Italian towns whose unspeakable dreariness is only attractive when viewed through the pages of Stendhal. The unrelaxing severity of an austere and pedant father curbed, as with a bit, every symptom of that haphazard gayety which is incident to youth. At once precocious and restive, deformed yet inflammable, he was necessarily enervated by the exasperating dullness of his life, and chafed, too, by the rigid poverty to which his father condemned him. As he grew up, his mind, richly stored with the wealth of

antiquity, rioted in a turbulency of imagination which, unable to find sympathetic welcome without, consumed itself in morbid distrust within, and led him at last from fervid Catholicism down the precipitate steps of negation.

He was not much over twenty before excessive study had well-nigh ruined such health as he once possessed. The slightest application was wearisome both to eye and brain. He wandered silently about the neighboring forests, seeking solitude not only for the sake of solitude, but also perhaps for the suggestions, at once soothing and rebellious, which solitude always whispers to him who courts her truly. At other times he sat hour by hour in a state as motionless as that of catalepsy. "I am so much overcome," he wrote to a friend, "by the nothingness that surrounds me, that I do not know how I have the strength to answer your letter. If at this moment I lost my reason, I think that my insanity would consist in sitting always with eyes fixed, open-mouthed, without laughing or weeping, or changing place. I have no longer the strength to form a desire, be it even for death."

The Muse, however, would have none of this; she flaunted her peplum so seductively before him that, a little later, when he had been visited by some semblance of returning health, he resisted no longer, and delivered himself up to her, heart and soul.

The present century, especially during its earlier decades, has been racked with a great glut of despondent verse; but no batch of poets, however distressed, has been able, at any time, to catch and cling to such a persistent monotone of complaint as that which runs through every line of Leopardi's

verse. To quote De Musset:—

> "Les plus désespérés sont les chants les
> plus beaux,
> Et j'en sais d'immortels qui sont de purs
> sanglots."

His odes, his adjurations to Italy, and his elegies are, one and all, stamped with such unvarying and changeless despair, that their dominant motive seems not unlike that tower which René, finding alone in the desert, compared to a great thought in a mind ravaged by years and by grief. His theory of life never altered; he resumed it in a distich,—

> ... "Arcano é tutto
> Fuor che il nostro dolor."

It may be said, and with justice perhaps, that it was the invalid body, aggravating and coexisting with a mind naturally morbid, that afterwards wrote of the *gentilezza del morir*, but it was the thinker, conquering the ills of the flesh, who later whispered to the suffering world the panacea of patience and resignation.

In Leopardi there is none of the vapid elegance and gaudy vocabulary of French verse; technically, he wrote in what the Italians call *rime sciolte*, and he charms the reader as well through a palpitant sincerity as evident and continuous inspiration. Now, the educated Italian turns naturally to rhyme; any incident holds to him the germ of a sonnet, and there is perhaps no other country in the world so richly dowered with patriotic canzoni as this joyously unhappy land. But of all who have sounded this eloquent chord, not one has done so with the

masculine originality and fervor of expression that Leopardi reached in his ode to Italy, in which, in a resounding call to arms, he exclaims:—

"Let my blood, O gods! be a flame to
Italian hearts."

Italian hearts, however, had other matters to attend to, and Leopardi's magnificent invocation was barely honored with a passing notice. For that matter, his poetry, in spite of its resonant merit, has, through some inexplicable cause, been generally ignored; and while it resembles no other, it has never, so to speak, been in vogue.

As has been seen, he was a lover of solitude; indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that he was glued to it; and in the isolation which he partly made himself, and which was partly forced upon him, he watched the incubation of thought very much as another might have noted the progress of a disease. A life of this description, even at best, is hardly calculated to awaken much enthusiasm for every-day matters, and it was not long before Leopardi became not only heartily sick of the commonplace aspects of life, but contemptuous, too, of those who lived in broader and more active spheres.

Poetically untrammeled, and of advanced views on all subjects, he regarded erudition as the simple novitiate of the man of letters, or in other words, as a preparation which renders the intelligence supple and pliant; and in one of those rare moments, when the timid approach of ambition was seemingly unnoticed, he caressed the pleasing plan of attacking Italian torpor with reason, passion with laughter, and of becoming, in fact, the Plato, the Shakespeare, and

the Lucian of his epoch. To Giordani, his mentor, he wrote: "I study night and day, so long as my health permits; when it prevents me from working, I wait a month or so, and then begin again. As I am now totally different from that which I was, my plan of study has altered with me. Everything which savors of the pathetic or the eloquent wearies me beyond expression. I seek now only the true, the real, which before was so repulsive. I take pleasure in analyzing the misery of men and things, and in shivering as I note the sinister and terrible mystery of life. I see very clearly that when passion is once extinguished, there subsists in study no other source of pleasure save that of vain curiosity, whose satisfaction, however, is not without a certain charm."

But Leopardi was so essentially the poet that, in spite of his growing disdain of the pathetic and the eloquent, he became not infrequently the dupe of his own imagination. That which he took for the fruit of deduction was probably little more than ordinary hypochondria, and in turning as he did to other work, he was never able to free himself entirely from the jealous influence of the muse.

He was, from a variety of causes, very miserable himself, and his belief in universal misery amounted very nearly to a mania. His logic reduced itself to the paraphrase of an axiom, "I am, therefore I suffer," and the suffering which he experienced was not, he was very sure, limited solely to himself. It was, he considered, the garment and appanage of every sentient being. In this he was perfectly correct, but his error consisted in holding all cases to be equally intense, and in imagining that means might be devised which would at once do away with or, at least, lessen the evil. Patience and resignation he had

already suggested, but naturally without appreciable success; indeed, the regeneration of man, he clearly saw, was not to be brought about through verse, and he turned therefore to philosophy with a fixity of purpose, which was strengthened by the idea that he could work therein another revolution. This was in 1825. Leopardi at that time was in his twenty-seventh year, and the task to which he then devoted himself was, he said, to be the sad ending of a miserable life. His intention was to run the bitter truth to earth, to learn the obscure destinies of the mortal and the eternal, to discover the wherefore of creation, and the reason of man's burden of misery. "I wish," he said, "to dig to the root of nature and seek the aim of the mysterious universe, whose praises the sages sing, and before which I stand aghast."

Forthwith, then, in the "Operette Morale," Leopardi began a resolute, if poetic, siege against every form of illusion. His philosophy, however, provoked no revolution, nor can it be even said that he discovered any truth more bitter than the old new ones, which antiquity had unearthed before him. His work, nevertheless, sent the old facts spinning into fresh and novel positions, and is to be particularly admired for the artistic manner in which it handles the most stubborn topics. The starting point of each of his arguments is that life is evil; to any objection, and the objections that have been made are countless, Leopardi has one invariable reply, "All that is advanced to the contrary is the result of illusion." "But supposing life to be painless," some one presumably may interject, whereupon Leopardi, with the air of an oracle, too busy with weighty matters to descend to chit-chat on the weather, will answer tersely, "Evil still."

It is useless for the practical man of the day, who knows the price of wheat the whole world over before he has tasted his coffee, and who digests a history of the world's doings and misdoings each morning with his breakfast,—it is useless for him to say, as he invariably does:—Why, this is rubbish, look at modern institutions, look at progress, look at science; for if he listens to Leopardi he will learn that all these palpable advantages have, in expanding activity, only aggravated the misery of man. In other words, that the sorrows of men and of nations develop in proportion to their intelligence, and the most civilized are in consequence the most unhappy.

Indeed, Leopardi's philosophy is nothing if not destructive; he does not aim so much to edify as to undermine. According to his theory the universe is the resultant of an unconscious force, and this force, he teaches, is shrouded in a vexatious mystery, behind which it is not given to man to look. In one of his dialogues, certain mummies resurrect for a quarter of an hour and tell in what manner they died. "And what follows death?" their auditor asks, eagerly. But the quarter of an hour has expired and the mummies relapse into silence.

In another fantastic scene, an Icelander, convinced that happiness is unattainable, and solely occupied in avoiding pain, has, in shunning society, found himself in the heart of the Sahara, face to face with Nature. This Icelander, who, by the way, singularly resembles Leopardi, had found but one protection against the ills of life, and that was solitude; but wherever he wandered he had been pursued by a certain malevolence. In spite of all he could do, he had roasted in summer and shivered in winter. In vain he had sought a temperate climate: one land

was an ice-field, another an oven, and everywhere tempests or earthquakes, vicious brutes or distracting insects. In short, unalloyed misery. Finding himself, at last, face to face with Nature he took her to task, demanding what right she had to create him without his permission, and then, having done so, to leave him to his own devices? Nature answers that she has but one duty, and that is to turn the wheel of the universe, in which death supports life, and life death. "Well, then," the obstinate Icelander asks, "tell me at least for whose pleasure and for what purpose this miserable universe subsists?" But before Nature can enlighten her embarrassing questioner, he is surprised by two famished lions and conveniently devoured.

The moral of all this is not difficult to find. Life, such as it is, is all this is accorded. Beyond it there is only an impenetrable silence. The blue of the heavens is pervasive, but void. The hope of ultramundane felicity is, therefore, an illusion, and man is to seek such happiness as is possible only in this life. But if it be asked what the possibilities of earthly happiness are, Leopardi is quick to tell his reader that there are none at all.

As has been seen, he regarded life as an evil; and he insisted in so regarding it, not only as a whole, but in each of its fractional divisions. This idea is quaintly expressed in a dialogue between a sorcerer and a demon, the latter having been presumably summoned with an incantatory blue flame. The demon is somewhat sulky at first, and asks why he has been disturbed. Is it wealth that the sorcerer wishes? Is it glory or grandeur? But the sorcerer has neither greed nor ambition.

"Do you wish me to procure for you a woman as captiously capricious as Penelope?"

The sorcerer probably smiles, for he answers wittily: —

"Do you think I need the aid of a devil for that?"

Thus outfaced, the demon begs to know in what manner he may be of service.

"I simply want one moment of happiness," the sorcerer answers.

But Mephisto declares, on his word as a gentleman, that such a thing is impossible, because the desire for happiness is insatiable, and no one can be happy so long as it is unsatisfied.

"Well, then?" the sorcerer asks, moodily querulous.

"Well, then," answers the demon, "if you think it worth while to give me your soul before the time, behold me ready to oblige you."

Since happiness, then, is intangible, the wisest thing to do is to try to be as little unhappy as possible. One of the chief opponents to such a state of being is evidently discontent, and this, Leopardi hints, should be routed at any cost, and the yawning spectre of ennui flung with it into fettered exile. In the warmth of these instructions it is curious to note how Leopardi turns on himself, so to speak, and recommends as cure-all the very activity which he had before proscribed. In his dialogue between Columbus and Gutierrez, the navigator admits to his discouraged companion that the success of the undertaking is far from certain; "but," he adds, "even if no other benefit accrue from our voyage, it will be

an advantage at least in this; it has for a certain time delivered us from boredom; it has made us love life, and appreciate, moreover, many things of which otherwise we would have thought nothing."

It should not, however, be supposed that Leopardi had no higher rule of life than that which is circumscribed in the narrow avoidance of discontent. That man has certain duties to perform, he frequently admitted, but he denied that he owed any to the unconscious and tyrannical force which had given him life. "I will never kiss," he said, "the hand that strikes." Any obligation to society was equally out of the question. "Society," he noted in the *Pensieri*, "is a league of blackguards against honest men." Man's duties are to himself alone; and the essence of Leopardi's ethics (as, indeed, of all other ethics) is held simply in the recommendation that virtue and self-esteem be preserved. "To thine own self be true," Polonius had said long before, and to this Leopardi had nothing to add.

The illusions which hamper life have been so clearly and thoroughly analyzed by other thinkers, whose conclusions will be found to constitute the groundwork of the subsequent part of this monograph, that it will be unnecessary at this stage to examine any of Leopardi's theories on this subject, save such, perhaps, as may seem to contain original views. He had, as has been intimated, a thorough contempt for life: "It is," he said, "fit but to be despised." *Nostra vita a che val, sola a spregiarla.* He was, in consequence, well equipped to combat the illusion which leads so many to imagine that were their circumstances different, they would then be thoroughly content. This idea is presented with vivacious ingenuity in a dialogue between a man

peddling calendars and a passer-by.

It runs somewhat as follows:—

"Calendars! New calendars!"

"For the coming year?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think the year will be a good one?"

"Yes, indeed, sir."

"As good as last year?"

"Better, sir,—better."

"As year before last?"

"Much better, sir."

"But wouldn't you care to have the next year like any of the past years?"

"No, sir, I would not."

"For how long have you been selling calendars?"

"Nearly twenty years, sir."

"Well, which of these twenty years would you wish to have like the coming one?"

"I? I really don't know, sir."

"Can't you remember any one year that seemed particularly attractive?"

"I cannot, indeed, I cannot."

"And yet life is very pleasant, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes, sir, we all know that."

"Would you not be glad to live these twenty years over again?"

"God forbid, sir."

"But supposing you had to live your life over again?"

"I would not do it."

"But what life would you care to live? mine, for instance, or that of a prince, or of some other person?"

"Ah, sir, what a question!"

"And yet, do you not see that I, or the prince, or any one else, would answer precisely as you do, and that no one would consent to live his life over again?"

"Yes, sir, I suppose so."

"Am I to understand, then, that you would not live your life over again?"

"No, sir, truly, I would not."

"What life would you care for, then?"

"I would like, without any other condition, such a life as God might be pleased to give me."

"In other words, one which would be happy-go-lucky, and of which you would know no more than you do of the coming year."

"Exactly."

> "Well, then, that is what I would like too; it is what every one would like, and for the simple reason that up to this time there is no one whom chance has not badly treated. Every one agrees that the misery of life outbalances its pleasure, and I have yet to meet the man who would care to live his old life over. The life which is so pleasant is not the life with which we are personally acquainted; it is another life, not the life that we have lived, but the life which is to come. Next year will treat us all better; it will be the beginning of a happy existence. Do you not think it will?"
>
> "Indeed, I hope so, sir."
>
> "Show me your best calendar."
>
> "This one, sir; it is thirty soldi."
>
> "Here they are."
>
> "Thank you, sir, long life to you, sir. Calendars! new calendars!"

There are few scenes as clever as this, and fewer still in which irony and humor are so delicately blended; and yet, notwithstanding its studied bitterness, there is little doubt that its author clearly perceived that life does hold one or two incontestable charms.

In speaking of glory, Pascal noted in his "Pensées" that even philosophers seek it, and those who wrote it down wished the reputation of having written it down well. To this rule Leopardi was no exception; he admitted as much on several occasions; and even if he had not done so, the fact would have been none the less evident from the burnish of his verse and the

purity of his prose, which was not that of a writer to whom the opinion of others was indifferent. In the essay, therefore, in which he attacks the illusion of literary renown, he reminds one forcibly of Byron hurrying about in search of the visible isolation which that simple-minded poet so seriously pursued; and yet while no other writer, perhaps, has been more thoroughly given to *pose* than the author of "Childe Harold," there are few who have been so entirely devoid of affectation as Leopardi. The comparative non-success of his writings, however, was hardly calculated to make him view with any great enthusiasm the subject of literary fame; and as, moreover, he considered it his mission to besiege all illusions, he held up this one in particular as a seductive chimera and attacked it accordingly.

In the "Ovvero della Gloria," he says reflectively: "Before an author can reach the public with any chance of being judged without prejudice, think of the amount of labor which he expends in learning how to write, the difficulties which he has to overcome, and the envious voices which he must silence. And even then, what does the public amount to? The majority of readers yawn over a book, or admire it because some one else has admired it before them. It is the style that makes a book immortal; and as it requires a certain education to be a judge of style, the number of connoisseurs is necessarily restricted. But beyond mere form there must also be depth, and as each class of work presupposes a special competence on the part of the critic, it is easy to see how narrow the tribunal is which decides an author's reputation. And even then, is it one which is thoroughly just? In the first place, the critic, even when competent, judges—and in that he is but human—according to the impression of the

moment, and according to the tastes which age or circumstances have created. If he is young, he likes brilliance; old, he is unimpressionable. Great reputations are made in great cities, and it is there that heart and mind are more or less fatigued. A first impression, warped in this way, may often become final; for if it be true that valuable works should be re-read, and are only appreciated with time, it is also true that at the present time very few books are read at all. Supposing, however, the most favorable case: supposing that a writer, through the suffrage of a few of his contemporaries, is certain of descending to posterity as a great man,—what is a great man? Simply a name, which in a short time will represent nothing. The opinion of the beautiful changes with the days, and literary reputations are at the mercy of their variations; as to scientific works, they are invariably surpassed or forgotten. Nowadays, any second-rate mathematician knows more than Galileo or Newton." Genius, then, is a sinister gift, and its attendant glory but a vain and empty shadow.

The life of Leopardi, as told by his biographers, is poetically suggestive of the story of the pale Armide, who burned the palace that enchanted her; and the similarity becomes still more noticeable when he is found hacking and hewing at the illusion of love. Personally considered, Leopardi was not attractive; he was undersized, slightly deformed, near-sighted, prematurely bald, nervous, and weak; and though physical disadvantages are often disregarded by women, and not infrequently inspire a compassion which, properly tended, may warm into love, yet when the body, weak and infirm as was his, incases the strength and lurid vitality of genius, the unlovable monstrosity is complete. Indeed, in this respect, it may be noted that while the love of a

delicate-minded woman for a coarse and stupid ruffian is an anomaly of daily repetition, there are yet few instances in which genius, even when strong of limb, has succeeded in inspiring a great and enduring affection.

Against Leopardi, then, the house of love was doubly barred. When he was about nineteen, he watched the usual young girl who lives over the way, and with a *naïveté* which seems exquisitely pathetic he made no sign, but simply watched and loved. The young lady does not appear to have been in any way conscious of the mutely shy adoration which her beauty had fanned into flame, and at any rate paid no attention to the sickly dwarf across the street. She sat very placidly at her window, or else fluttered about the room humming some old-fashioned air. This went on for a year or more, until finally she was carried away in a rumbling coach, to become the willing bride of another.

This, of course, was very terrible to Leopardi. Through some inductive process, which ought to have been brought about by the electric currents which he was establishing from behind the curtain, he had in his lawless fancy made quite sure that his love would sooner or later be felt and reciprocated. When, therefore, from his hiding place he saw the bride depart in maiden ignorance of her conquest, and entirely unconscious of the sonnets which had been written in her praise, the poet's one sweet hope faded slowly with her.

This pure and sedate affection remained vibrant in his memory for many years, and formed the theme of so many reveries and songs that love finally appeared to him as but another form of suffering. In

after life, when much of the lustre of youthful candor had become dull and tarnished, he besieged the heart of another lady, but this time in a bolder and more enterprising fashion. His suit, however, was unsuccessful. It may be that he was too eloquent; for eloquence is rarely captivating save to the inexperienced, and the man who makes love in rounded phrases seems to the practised eye to be more artistic than sincere. At all events, his affection was not returned. The phantom had passed very close, but all he had clutched was the air. He was soon conscious, however, that he had made that mistake which is common to all imaginative people: it was not the woman he loved, it was beauty; not woman herself, but the ideal. It was a conception that he had fallen in love with; a conception which the woman, like so many others, had the power to inspire, and yet lacked the ability to understand. This time Leopardi was done with love, and forthwith attacked it as the last, yet most tenacious, of all illusions. "It is," he said, "an error like the others, but one which is more deeply rooted, because, when all else is gone, men think they clutch therein the last shadow of departing happiness. Error beato," he adds, and so it may be, yet is he not well answered by that sage saying of Voltaire, "L'erreur aussi a son mérite"?

It was in this way that Leopardi devastated the palace from whose feasts he had been excluded. At every step he had taken he had left some hope behind; he had been dying piecemeal all his life; he was confessedly miserable, and this not alone on account of his poverty and wretched health, but chiefly because of his lack of harmony with the realities of existence. The world was to him the worst one possible, and he would have been glad to adorn

the gate of life with the simplicity of Dante's insistent line,—

"Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate."

"There was a time," he said, "when I envied the ignorant and those who thought well of themselves. To-day, I envy neither the ignorant nor the wise, neither the great nor the weak; I envy the dead, and I would only change with them."

This, of course, was purely personal. Toward the close of his life he recognized that his judgment had been in a measure warped by the peculiar misfortunes of his own position, but in so doing he seemed almost to be depriving himself of a last, if sad, consolation. Nor did he ever wholly recant, and it is in the conception of the universality of misery which stamped all his writings, and which, even had he wished, he was then powerless to alter, that his relation to the theoretic pessimism of to-day chiefly rests.

As a creed, the birthplace of pessimism is to be sought on the banks of the Ganges, or far back in the flower-lands of Nepaul, where the initiate, with every desire lulled, awaits Nirvâna, and murmurs only, "Life is evil."

Now, as is well known, in every religion there is a certain metaphysical basis which is designed to supply an answer to man's first question; for while the animal lives in undismayed repose, man of all created things alone marvels at his own existence and at the destruction of his fellows. To his first question, then, What is life and death? each system attempts to offer a perfect reply; indeed, the temples, cathedrals, and pagodas clearly attest that man at all

times and in all lands has continually demanded that some reply should be given, and it is perhaps for this very reason that where other beliefs have found fervent adherents, neither materialism nor skepticism have been ever able to acquire a durable influence. It is, however, curious to note that in attempting the answer, nearly every creed has given an unfavorable interpretation to life. Aside from the glorious lessons of Christianity, its teaching, in brief, is that the world is a vale of tears, that nothing here can yield any real satisfaction, and that happiness, which is not for mortals, is solely the recompense of the ransomed soul. To the Brahmin, while there is always the hope of absorption in the Universal Spirit, life meanwhile is a regrettable accident. But in Buddhism, which is perhaps the most naïve and yet the most sublime of all religions, and which through its very combination of simplicity and grandeur appeals to a larger number of adherents than any other, pessimism is the beginning, as it is the end.

To the Buddhist there is reality neither in the future nor in the past. To him true knowledge consists in the perception of the nothingness of all things, in the consciousness of—

> "The vastness of the agony of earth,
> The vainness of its joys, the mockery
> Of all its best, the anguish of its worst;"

and in the desire to escape from the evil of existence into the entire affranchisement of the intelligence. To the Buddhist,—

> ... "Sorrow is
> Shadow to life, moving where life doth
> move."

The Buddhist believes that the soul migrates until Nirvâna is attained, and that in the preparation for this state, which is the death of Death, the nothingness of a flame extinguished, there are four degrees. In the first, the novitiate learns to be implacable to himself, yet charitable and compassionate to others. He then acquires an understanding into the nature of all things, until he has suppressed every desire save that of attaining Nirvâna, when he passes initiate into the second degree, in which judgment ceases. In the next stage, the vague sentiment of satisfaction, which had been derived from intellectual perfection, is lost, and in the last, the confused consciousness of identity disappears. It is at this point that Nirvâna begins, but only begins and stretches to vertiginous heights through four higher degrees of ecstasy, of which the first is the region of infinity in space, the next, the realm of infinity in intelligence, then the sphere in which nothing is, and, finally, the loss of even the perception of nothing. When Death is dead, when all have attained Nirvâna, then, according to the Buddhist, the universe will rock forevermore in unconscious rest.

In brief, then, life to the Christian is a probation, to the Brahmin a burden, to the Buddhist a dream, and to the pessimist a nightmare.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen.*

[2] *Werke*, *v.* p. 408, *et seq.*

CHAPTER II.

THE HIGH PRIEST OF PESSIMISM.

Arthur Schopenhauer, the founder of the present school, was born toward the close of the last century, in the now mildewed city of Dantzic. His people came of good Dutch stock, and were both well-to-do and peculiar. His grandmother lost her reason at the death of her husband, a circumstance as unusual then as in more recent years; his two uncles passed their melancholy lives on the frontiers of insanity, and his father enjoyed a reputation for eccentricity which his end fully justified.

This latter gentleman was a rich and energetic merchant, of educated tastes and excitable disposition, who, when well advanced in middle life, married the young and gifted daughter of one of the chief magnates of the town. Their union was not more unhappy than is usually the case under similar circumstances, his time being generally passed with his ledger, and hers with the poets.

With increasing years, however, his untamable petulance grew to such an extent that he was not at all times considered perfectly sane, and it is related that on being visited one day by a lifelong acquaintance, who announced himself as an old friend, he exclaimed, with abrupt indignation, "Friend, indeed! there is no such thing; besides, people come here every day and say they are this, that, and the other. I don't know them, and I don't

want to." A day or two later, he met the same individual, greeted him with cheerful cordiality, and led him amiably home to dinner. Shortly after, he threw himself from his warehouse to the canal below.

He had always intended that his son, who was then in his sixteenth year, should continue the business; and to prepare him properly for his duties he had christened him Arthur, because he found that name was pretty much the same in all European languages, and furthermore had sent the lad at an early age first to France, and then to England, that he might gain some acquaintance and familiarity with other tongues.

The boy liked his name, and took naturally to languages, but he felt no desire to utilize these possessions in the depressing atmosphere of commercial life, and after his father's death loitered first at the benches of Gotha and then at those of Göttingen.

Meanwhile his mother established herself at Weimar, where she soon attracted to her all that was brilliant in that brilliant city. Goethe, Wieland, Fernow, Falk, Grimm, and the two Schlegels were her constant guests. At court she was received as a welcome addition, and such an effect had these surroundings upon her imagination, that in not very many years she managed to produce twenty-four compact volumes of criticism and romance.

During this time her son was not idle. Thoroughly familiar with ancient as with modern literature, he devoted his first year at Göttingen to medicine, mathematics and history; while in his second, which he passed in company with Bunsen and William B.

Astor, he studied physics, physiology, psychology, ethnology and logic; as these diversions did not quite fill the hour, he aided the flight of idle moments with a guitar.

He was at this time a singularly good-looking young man, possessing a grave and expressive type of beauty, which in after years developed into that suggestion of majestic calm for which the head of Beethoven is celebrated, while to his lips there then came a smile as relentlessly implacable as that of Voltaire.

From boyhood he had been of a thoughtful disposition, finding wisdom in the falling leaf, problems in vibrating light, and movement in immobility. Already he had wrung his hands at the stars, and watched the distant future rise with its flouting jeer at the ills of man. In this, however, there was little of the cheap sentimentalism of Byron, and less of the weariness of Lamartine. His griefs were purely objective; life to him was a perplexing riddle, whose true meaning was well worth a search; and as the only possible solution of the gigantic enigma seemed to lie in some unexplored depth of metaphysics, he soon after betook himself to Berlin, where Fichte then reigned as Kant's legitimate successor. But the long-winded demonstrations that Fichte affected, his tiresome verbiage, lit, if at all, only by some trivial truism or trumpery paradox, bored Schopenhauer at first well-nigh to death, and then worked on his nerves to such an extent that he longed, pistol in hand, to catch at his throat, and cry, "Die like a dog you shall; but for your pitiful soul's sake, tell me if in all this rubbish you really mean anything, or take me simply for an imbecile like yourself." For Schopenhauer, it should be

understood, had passed his nights first with Plato and then with Kant; they were to him like two giants calling to one another across the centuries, and that this huckster of phrases should pretend to cloak his nakedness with their mantle seemed to him at once indecent and absurd.

Schelling pleased him no better; he dismissed him with a word,—mountebank; but for Hegel, Caliban-Hegel as he was wont in after years to call him, his contempt was so violent that, with a prudence which is both amusing and characteristic, he took counsel from an attorney as to the exact limit he might touch in abusing him without becoming amenable to a suit for defamation. "Hegel's philosophy," he said, "is a crystalized syllogism; it is an abracadabra, a puff of bombast, and a wish-wash of phrases, which in its monstrous construction compels the mind to form impossible contradictions, and in itself is enough to cause an entire atrophy of the intellect." "It is made up of three fourths nonsense and one fourth error; it contains words, not thoughts;" and then, rising in his indignation to the heights of quotation, he added, "'Such stuff as madmen tongue and brain not.'" Time, it may be noted, has to a great extent indorsed Schopenhauer's verdict. The tortures of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel linger now in the history of philosophy very much as might the memory of a nightmare, and except in a few cobwebbed halls the teachings of the three sophists may safely be considered as a part of the inexplicable past.

It should not, however, be supposed that because he found the philosophy of the moment so little to his taste he necessarily squandered his time; on the contrary, he turned to Aristotle and Spinoza for consolation, and therewith followed sundry lectures

in magnetism, electricity, ichthyology, amphiology, ornithology, zoölogy, and astronomy, all of which he enlivened with rapid incursions to the rich granaries of Rabelais and Montaigne, and moreover gave no little time to the study of the religion and philosophy of India.

It was at this time characteristic of the man, that while his appearance, wealth, and connections would have formed an open letter to the best society in Berlin, which was then heterogeneously agreeable, or even to the worst, which is said to have been charming, he preferred to pass his leisure hours in scrutinizing the animals in the Zoölogical Gardens, and in studying the inmates of the State Lunatic Asylum.

In this *città dolente* his attention was particularly claimed by two unfortunates who, while perfectly conscious of their infirmity, were yet unable to master it; in proof of which, one wrote him a series of sonnets, and the other sent him annotated passages from the Bible.

In the second year of his student life at Berlin the war of 1813 was declared, and Schopenhauer was in consequence obliged to leave the city before he had obtained his degree. He prepared, however, and forwarded to the faculty at Jena an elaborate thesis, which he entitled the Quadruple Root of Conclusive Reason,—a name which somewhat astounded his mother, who asked him if it were something for the apothecary,—and meanwhile prowled about Weimar meditating on the philosophy which he had long intended to produce. He visited no one but Goethe, took umbrage at his mother's probably harmless relations with Fernow, treated her to discourse not

dissimilar to that which Hamlet had addressed to his own parent, received his degree from Jena, and then went off to Dresden, where he began to study women with that microscopic eye which he turned on all subjects that engaged his attention.

The result of these studies was an essay on the metaphysics of love, which he thereupon attached to his budding system of philosophy; an axiom to the effect that women are rich in hair and poor in thought; and the same misadventure that befell Descartes.

His life at Dresden was necessarily much less secluded than that to which he had been hitherto accustomed; he became an *habitué* at the opera and comedy, a frequent guest in literary and social circles, and, as student of men and things, he went about disturbing draperies and disarranging screens, very much as any other philosopher might do who was bent on seeing the world.

Meanwhile, he was not otherwise idle: the morning he gave to work, and in the afternoon he surrendered himself to Nature, whom he loved with a passionate devotion, which increased with his years. The companionship of men was always more or less irksome to him; and while it was less so perhaps at this time than at any other, it was nevertheless with a sense of relief that he struck out across the inviting pasture-lands of Saxony, or down the banks of the Elbe, and left humanity behind, in search of that open-air solitude which is Nature's nearest friend.

In the companionship of others he was constantly seeking a trait or a suggestion, some hint capable of development; when in the world, therefore, he flashed a lantern, so to speak, at people, and then

passed them by; but in the open country he communed with himself, and strolled along, note-book in hand, jotting down the thoughts worth jotting very much after the manner that Emerson is said to have recommended.

With regard to the majority of men, it will not seem reckless to say that their end and aim is happiness and self-satisfaction; but however trite the remark may be, it may still perhaps serve to bring into relief something of Schopenhauer's distinctive purpose. It would, of course, be foolish to assert that he did not care for his own happiness, and disregarded his own satisfaction, for of these things few men, it is imagined, have thought more highly. If his ideas of happiness diverged widely from those generally received as standards, it has but little to do with the matter in hand, for the point which is intended to be conveyed is simply that above all other things, beyond the culture of self, that which Schopenhauer cared for most was truth, and that he pursued it, moreover, as pertinaciously as any other thinker whom the world now honors. Whether he ran it to earth or not, the reader must himself decide; indeed, it was very many years before any one even heard that he had been chasing it at all. Of late, however, some of the best pickets who guard the literary outposts from Boston to Bombay have brought a very positive assurance that he did catch it, and, moreover, held it fast long enough to wring out some singularly valuable intimations.

In hurrying along after his quarry, Schopenhauer became convinced that life was a lesson which most men learned trippingly enough, but whose moral they failed to detect; and this moral, which he felt he had caught on the wing, as it were, he set about

dissecting with a great and sumptuous variety of reflection.

Wandering, then, on the banks of the Elbe, massing his thoughts and arranging their progression, his system slowly yet gradually expanded before him. He wrote only in moments of inspiration, yet his hours were full of such moments; little by little he drifted away from the opera and his friends into a solitude which he made populous with thought, and in this manner gave himself up so entirely to his philosophy that one day, it is reported, he astonished an innocent-minded gate-keeper, who asked him who he was, with the weird and pensive answer, "Ah! if I but knew, myself!"

Meanwhile his work grew rapidly beneath his hands, and when after four years of labor and research "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung" was so far completed as to permit its publication, he read it over with something of the same unfamiliarity which he would have experienced in reading the work of another author, though, doubtless, with greater satisfaction.

Fascinated with its merits, he offered the manuscript to Brockhaus, the Leipsic publisher. "My book," he wrote, "is a new system of philosophy, but when I say new I mean new in every sense of the word; it is not a restatement of what has been already expressed, but it is in the highest degree a continuous flow of thought such as has never before entered the mind of mortal man. It is a book which, in my opinion, is destined to rank with those which form the source and incentive to hundreds of others."

Brockhaus, familiar with the proverbial modesty of young authors, lent but an inattentive ear to these alluring statements, and accepted the book solely on

account of the reputation which Schopenhauer's mother then enjoyed; a mark of confidence, by the way, which he soon deeply regretted. "It is so much waste paper," he said, dismally, in after years; "I wish I had never heard of it." He lived long enough, however, to change his mind, and in 1880 his successors published a stout little pamphlet containing the titles of over five hundred books and articles, of which the "World as Will and Idea" formed the source and incentive. "Le monde," Montaigne has quaintly noted, "regorge de commentaires, mais d'auteurs il en est grand chierté."

Schopenhauer's philosophy first appeared in 1818; but while it was still in press, its author, like one who has sprung a mine and fears the report, fled away to Italy, where he wandered about from Venice to Naples bathing his senses in color and music. He associated at this time very willingly with Englishmen, and especially with English artists and men of letters. Germans and Americans he avoided, and as for Jews, he not only detested them, but expressed an admiring approval of Nebuchadnezzar, and only regretted that he had been so lenient with them. "The Jews are God's chosen people, are they?" he would say, "very good; tastes differ, they certainly are not mine." In this dislike he made no exception, and scenting in after years some of the *fœtor judaicus* on Heine and Meyerbeer, he refused them the attention which others were only too glad to accord. Schopenhauer's distaste, however, for everything that savored of the Israelite will be perhaps more readily understood when it is remembered that the Jews, as a race, are optimists, and their creed, therefore, to him, in his consistency, was like the aggressive flag to the typical bull.

With the Germans he had another grievance. "The Germans," he said, "are heavy by nature; it is a national characteristic, and one which is noticeable not only in the way they carry themselves, but in their language, their fiction, their conversation, their writings, their way of thinking, and especially in their style and in their mania for constructing long and involved sentences. In reading German," he continued, "memory is obliged to retain mechanically, as in a lesson, the words that are forced upon it, until after patient labor a period is reached, the keynote is found, and the meaning disentangled. When the Germans," he added, "get hold of a vague and unsuitable expression which will completely obscure their meaning, they pat themselves on the back; for their great aim is to leave an opening in every phrase, through which they may seem to come back and say more than they thought. In this trick they excel, and if they can manage to be emphatic and affected at the same time, they are simply afloat in a sea of joy. Foreigners hate all this, and revenge themselves in reading German as little as possible.... Wherefore, in provision of my death, I acknowledge that on account of its infinite stupidity I loathe the German nation, and that I blush to belong thereto."

At various *tables-d'hôte* Schopenhauer had encountered traveling Yankees, and objected to them accordingly. "They are," he said, "the *plebs* of the world, partly, I suppose, on account of their republican government, and partly because they descend from those who left Europe for Europe's good. The climate, too," he added, reflectively, "may have something to do with it." Nor did Frenchmen escape his satire. "Other parts of the world have monkeys; Europe has Frenchmen, *ça balance*."

But with Englishmen he got on very well, and during his after life always talked to himself in their tongue, wrote his memoranda in English, and read the "Times" daily, advertisements and all.

Meanwhile Schopenhauer held his hand to his ear unavailingly. From across the Alps there came to him no echo of any report, only a silence which was ominous enough to have assured any other that the fusee had not been properly applied. But to him it was different; he had, it is true, expected a reverberation which would shake the sophistry of all civilization, and when no tremor came he was mystified, but only for the moment. He had been too much accustomed to seek his own dead in the great morgue of literature not to know that any man, who is to belong to posterity, is necessarily a stranger to his epoch. And that he was to belong to posterity he had no possible doubt; indeed he had that prescience of genius which foresees its own future, and he felt that however tightly the bushel might be closed over the light, there were still crevices through which it yet would shine, and from which at last some conflagration must necessarily burst.

It was part of the man to analyze all things, and while it cannot be said that the lack of attention with which his philosophy had been received left him entirely unmoved, it would be incorrect to suppose that he was then sitting on the pins and needles of impatience.

Deeply reflective, he was naturally aware that as everything which is exquisite ripens slowly, so is the growth of fame proportioned to its durability. And Schopenhauer meant to be famous, and this not so much for fame's sake, as for the good which his fame

would spread with it. He could therefore well afford to wait. His work was not written especially to his own epoch, save only in so far as his epoch was part of humanity collectively considered. It did not, therefore, take him long to understand that as his work was not tinted with any of the local color and fugitive caprices of the moment, it was in consequence unadapted to an immediate and fictitious vogue. Indeed, it may be added that the history of art and literature is eloquent with the examples of the masterpieces which, unrewarded by contemporary appreciation, have passed into the welcome of another age; and of these examples few are more striking than that of the absolute indifference with which Schopenhauer's philosophy was first received.

It was presumably with reflections of this nature that Schopenhauer shrugged his shoulders at the inattention under which he labored, and wandered serenely among the treasuries and ghosts of departed Rome.

About this time an incident happened which, while not possessing any very vivid interest, so affected his after life as to be at least deserving of passing notice. Schopenhauer was then in his thirty-first year. On coming of age, he had received his share of his father's property, some of which he securely invested, but the greater part he deposited at high interest with a well-known business house in Dantzic. When leaving for Italy, he took from this firm notes payable on demand for the amount which they held to his credit, and after he had cashed one of their bills, learned that the firm was in difficulties. Shortly after, they suspended payment, offering thirty per cent. to those of their creditors who were

willing to accept such an arrangement, and nothing to those who refused.

All the creditors accepted save Schopenhauer, who, with the wile of a diplomat, wrote that he was in no hurry for his money, but that perhaps if he were made preferred creditor he might accept a better offer. His debtors fell into the trap, and offered him first fifty, and then seventy per cent. These offers he also refused. "If," he wrote, "you offer me thirty per cent. when you are able to pay fifty, and fifty per cent. when you are able to pay seventy, I have good reason to suspect that you can pay the whole amount. In any event, my right is perennial. I need not present my notes until I care to. Settle with your other creditors, and then you will be in a better position to attend to me. A wise man watches the burning phœnix with a certain pleasure, for he well knows what that crafty bird does with its ashes. Keep my money, and I will keep your drafts. When your affairs are straightened either we will exchange, or you will be arrested for debt. I am, of course, very sorry not to be able to oblige you, and I dare say you think me very disagreeable, but that is only an illusion of yours, which is at once dispelled when you remember that the money is my own, and that its possession concerns my lifelong freedom and well-being. You will say, perhaps, that if all your creditors thought as I do, it would be deuced hard for me. But if all men thought as I do, not only would more be thought, but there would probably be neither bankrupts nor swindlers. Machiavelli says, Giacchè il volgo pensa altrimente,—although the common herd think otherwise,—ma nel mondo non é se non volgo,—and the world is made up of the common herd,—e gli pocchi ivi luogo trovano,—yet the exceptions take their position,—dove gli molti

stare non possono,—where the crowd can find no foot-hold."

By the exercise of a little patience, and after a few more dagger thrusts of this description, Schopenhauer recovered the entire amount which was due him, together with the interest in full. But the danger which he had so cleverly avoided gave him, so to speak, a retrospective shock; the possibility of want had brushed too near for comfort's sake. He was thoroughly frightened; and in shuddering at the cause of his fright he experienced such a feeling of insecurity with regard to what the future might yet hold that he determined to lose no time in seeking a remunerative shelter. With this object he returned to Berlin, and as *privat-docent* began to lecture on the history of philosophy.

Hegel was then in the high tide of his glory. Scholars from far and near came to listen to the man who had compared himself to Christ, and said, "I am Truth, and teach truth." In the "Reisebilder," Heine says that in the learned caravansary of Berlin the camels collected about the fountain of Hegelian wisdom, kneeled down, received their burden of precious waters, and then set out across the desert wastes of Brandenburg.

At that time not to bend before Hegel was the blackest and most wanton of sins. To disagree with him was heretical, and as few understood his meaning clearly enough to attempt to controvert it, it will be readily understood that in those days there was very little heresy in Berlin.

Among the few, however, Schopenhauer headed the list. "I write to be understood," he said; and indeed no one who came in contact with him or with his

works had ever the least difficulty in seizing his meaning and understanding his immense disgust for the "pachyderm hydrocephali, pedantic eunuchs, apocaliptic retinue della bestia triumphante," as in after years, with gorgeous emphasis, he was wont to designate Hegel and his clique. The war that he waged against them was truly Homeric. He denounced Hegel in a manner that would have made Swinburne blush; then he attacked the professors of philosophy in general and the Hegelians in particular, and finally the demagogues who believed in them, and who had baptized themselves "Young Germany."

For the preparation of such writings as theirs he had a receipt, which was homeopathic in its simplicity. "Dilute a minimum of thought in five hundred pages of nauseous phraseology, and for the rest trust to the German patience of the reader." He also suggested that for the wonder and astonishment of posterity every public library should carefully preserve in half calf the complete works of the great philosophaster and his adorers; and, considering very correctly that philosophers cannot be hatched like bachelors of arts, he further recommended that the course in philosophy should be cut from the University programmes, and the teaching in that branch be limited to logic. "You can't write an Iliad," he said, "when your mother is a dolt, and your father is a cotton nightcap."

There are few debts which are so faithfully acquitted as those of contempt; and as Schopenhauer kicked down every screen, tore off every mask, and jeered at every sham, it would be a great stretch of fancy to imagine that he was a popular teacher. But this at least may be said: he was courageous, and he was

strong of purpose. In the end, he dragged Germany from her lethargy, and rather than take any other part in Hegelism than that of spectre at the feast, he condemned himself to an almost lifelong obscurity. If, therefore, he seems at times too bitter and too relentless, it should be remembered that this man, whom Germany now honors as one of her greatest philosophers, fought single-handed for thirty years, and routed the enemy at last by the mere force and lash of his words.

But in the mean time, while Hegel was holding forth to crowded halls, his rival, who, out of sheer bravado, had chosen the same hours, lectured to an audience of about half a dozen persons, among whom a dentist, a horse-jockey, and a captain on half pay were the more noteworthy. Such listeners were hardly calculated to make him frantically attached to the calling he had chosen, and accordingly at the end of the first semester he left the empty benches to take care of themselves.

Early in life Schopenhauer wrote in English, in his note-book, "Matrimony—war and want!" and when the *privat-docent* had been decently buried, and the crape grown rusty, he began to consider this little sentence with much attention. As will be seen later on, he objected to women as a class on purely logical grounds,—they interfered with his plan of delivering the world from suffering; but against the individual he had no marked dislike, only a few pleasing epigrams. During his Dresden sojourn, as in his journey to Italy, he had knelt, in his quality of philosopher who was seeing the world, at many and diverse shrines, and had in no sense wandered from them sorrow-laureled; but all that had been very different from assuming legal responsibilities, and

whenever he thought with favor of the *petits soins* of which, as married man, he would be the object, the phantom of a milliner's bill loomed in double columns before him.

Should he or should he not, he queried, fall into the trap which nature has set for all men? The question of love did not enter into the matter at all. He believed in love as most well-read people believe in William Tell; that is, as something very inspiring, especially when treated by Rossini, but otherwise as a myth. Nor did he need Montaigne's hint to be assured that men marry for others and not for themselves. The subject, therefore, was somewhat complex: on the one side stood the attention and admiration which he craved, and on the other an eternal farewell to that untrammeled freedom which is the thinker's natural heath.

The die, however, had to be cast then or never. He was getting on in life, and an opportunity had at that time presented itself, a repetition of which seemed unlikely. After much reflection, and much weighing of the pros and cons, he concluded that it is the married man who supports the full burden of life, while the bachelor bears but half, and it is to the latter class, he argued, that the courtesan of the muses should belong. Thereupon, with a luxury of reminiscence and quotation which was usual to him at all times, he strengthened his resolution with mental foot-notes, to the effect that Descartes, Leibnitz, Malebranche, and Kant were bachelors, the great poets uniformly married and uniformly unhappy; and supported it all with Bacon's statement that "he that hath wife and children has given hostages to fortune, for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or of mischief."

In 1831 the cholera appeared in Berlin, and Schopenhauer, who called himself a choleraphobe by profession, fled before it in search of a milder and healthier climate. Frankfort he chose for his hermitage, and from that time up to the day of his death, which occurred in September, 1860, he continued to live there in great peace and tranquillity.

Schopenhauer should in no wise be represented as having passed his life in building dungeons in Spain. Like every true scholar he was, in the absence of his peers, able to live with great comfort with the dead. He was something of a Mezzofanti; he spoke and read half a dozen languages with perfect ease, and he could in consequence enter any library with the certainty of finding friends and relations therein. For the companionship of others he did not care a rap. He was never so lonely as when associating with other people, and of all things that he disliked the most, and a catalogue of his dislikes would fill a chapter, the so-called entertainment headed the obnoxious list.

He had taken off, one by one, the different layers of the social nut, and in nibbling at the kernel he found its insipidity so great that he had small approval for those who made it part of their ordinary diet. It should not, however, be supposed that this dislike for society and the companionship of others sprang from any of that necessity for solitude which is noticeable in certain cases of hypochondria; it was simply due to the fact that he could not, in the general run of men, find any one with whom he could associate on a footing of equality. If Voltaire, Helvetius, Kant, or Cabanais, or, for that matter, any one possessed of original thoughts, had dwelled in the neighborhood,

Schopenhauer, once in a while, would have delighted in supping with them; but as agreeable symposiasts were infrequent, he was of necessity thrown entirely on his own resources. His history, in brief, is that of the malediction under which king and genius labor equally. Both are condemned to solitude; and for solitude such as theirs there is neither chart nor compass. Of course there are many other men who in modern times have also led lives of great seclusion, but in this respect it may confidently be stated that no thinker of recent years, Thoreau not excepted, has ever lived in isolation more thorough and complete than that which was enjoyed by this blithe misanthrope.

It is not as though he had betaken himself to an unfrequented waste, or to the top of an inaccessible crag; such behavior would have savored of an affectation of which he was incapable, and, moreover, would have told its story of an inability to otherwise resist the charms of society. Besides, Schopenhauer was no anchorite; he lived very comfortably in the heart of a populous and pleasant city, and dined daily at the best *table d'hôte*, but he lived and dined utterly alone.

He considered that, as a rule, a man is never in perfect harmony save with himself, for, he argued, however tenderly a friend or mistress may be beloved, there is at times some clash and discord. Perfect tranquillity, he said, is found only in solitude, and to be permanent only in absolute seclusion; and he insisted that the hermit, if intellectually rich, enjoys the happiest condition which this life can offer. The love of solitude, however, can hardly be said to exist in any one as a natural instinct; on the contrary, it may be regarded as an acquired taste,

and one which must be developed in indirect progression. Schopenhauer, who cultivated it to its most supreme expression, admitted that at first he had many fierce struggles with the natural instinct of sociability, and at times had strenuously combated some such Mephistophelian suggestion as,—

> "Hör' auf, mit deinem Gram zu spielen,
> Der, wie ein Geier, dir am Leben frisst:
> Die schlechteste Gesellschaft lässt dich
> fühlen
> Dass du ein Mensch, mit Menschen bist."

But solitude, more or less rigid, is undoubtedly the lot of all superior minds. They may grieve over it, as Schopenhauer says, but of two evils they will choose it as the least. After that, it is presumably but a question of getting acclimated. In old age the inclination comes, he notes, almost of itself. At sixty it is well-nigh instinctive; at that age everything is in its favor. The incentives which are the most energetic in behalf of sociability then no longer act. With advancing years there arises a capacity of sufficing to one's self, which little by little absorbs the social instinct. Illusions then have faded, and, ordinarily speaking, active life has ceased. There is nothing more to be expected, there are no plans nor projects to form, the generation to which old age really belongs has passed away, and, surrounded by a new race, one is then objectively and essentially alone.

Then, too, many things are clearly seen, which before were as veiled by a mist. As the result of long experience very little is expected from the majority of people, and the conclusion is generally reached that not only men do not improve on acquaintance,

but that mankind is made up of very defective copies, with which it is best to have as little to do as possible.

But beyond converting his life into a monodrama with reflections of this description, Schopenhauer considered himself to be a missionary of truth, and in consequence as little fitted for every-day companionship as missionaries in China feel themselves called upon to fraternize with the Chinese. It was the rule of his life to expect nothing, desire as little as possible, and learn all he could, and as little was to be expected and nothing was to be learned from the majority of the dull ruffians who go to the making of the census, it is not to be wondered that he trod the thoroughfares of thought alone and dismissed the majority of men with a shrug.

"They are," he said, "just what they seem to be, and that is the worst that can be said of them." Epigrams of this description were naturally not apt to increase his popularity. But for that he cared very little. He considered that no man can judge another save by the measure of his own understanding. Of course, if this understanding is of a low degree, the greatest intellectual gifts which another may possess convey to him no meaning; they are as colors to the blind; and consequently, in a great nature there will be noticed only those defects and weaknesses which are inseparable from every character.

But to such a man as Schopenhauer,—one who considered five sixths of the population to be knaves or blockheads, and who had thought out a system for the remaining fraction,—to such a man as he, the question of esteem, or the lack thereof, was of small consequence. He cared nothing for the existence

which he led in the minds of other people. To his own self he was true, to the calling of his destiny constant, and he felt that he could sit and snap his fingers at the world, knowing that Time, who is at least a gentleman, would bring him his due unasked.

Schopenhauer's character was made up of that combination of seeming contradictions which is the peculiarity of all great men. He had the audacity of childhood and the timidity of genius. He was suspicious of every one, and ineffably kind-hearted. With stupidity in any form he was blunt, even to violence, and yet his manner and courtesy were such as is attributed to the gentlemen of the old school. If he was an egotist, he was also charitable to excess; and who shall say that charity is not the egotism of great natures? He was honesty itself, and yet thought every one wished to cheat him. To mislead a possible thief he labeled his valuables Arcana Medica, put his banknotes in dictionaries, and his gold pieces in ink bottles. He slept on the ground floor, that he might escape easily in case of fire. If he heard a noise at night he snatched at a pistol, which he kept loaded at his bedside. Indeed, he might have chosen for his motto, "Je ne crains rien fors le dangier," and yet who is ever so foolish as a wise man? Kant's biography is full of similar vagaries, and one has but to turn to the history of any of the thinkers whose names are landmarks in literature, to find that eccentricities no less striking have also been recorded of them.

Voltaire said, "On aime la vie, mais le néant ne laisse pas d'avoir du bon;" and Schopenhauer, not to be outdone, added more massively, that if one could tap on the tombs and ask the dead if they cared to return, they would shake their heads. His views of

life, however, and of the world in general, will be considered later on, and for the moment it is but necessary to note that he regarded happiness as consisting solely in the absence of pain, and laid down as one of the supreme rules for the proper conduct of life that discontent should be banished as far as possible into the outer darkness.

When, therefore, to this Emerson in black there came those moments of restlessness and dissatisfaction which visit even the most philosophic, he would argue with himself in a way which was almost pathetic, and certainly naïve; it was not he that was moody and out of sorts, it was some *privat-docent* lecturing to empty halls, some one who was abused by the Philistines, some defendant in a suit for damages, some one whose fortune was engulfed perhaps beyond recovery, some lover pleading to inattentive ears, some one attacked by one of the thousand ills that flesh is heir to; yet this was not he; these things truly he might have endured and suffered as one bears for a moment an ill-made shoe, but now the foot no longer ached; indeed, he was none of all this, he was the author of the "Welt als Wille und Vorstellung," and what had the days to do with him!

But through all the intervening years the book had lain unnoticed on the back shelves of the Leipsic publisher; and Schopenhauer, who had at first been puzzled, but never disheartened, at the silence which had settled about it, became convinced that through the influence of the three sophists at Berlin, all mention of its merit had been suppressed from the start.

"I am," he said, "the Iron Mask, the Caspar Hauser of

philosophy," and thereupon he pictured the Hegelians as looking admiringly at his system, very much as the man in the fairy tale looked at the genie in the bottle which, had he allowed it to come out, would carry him off. Truth, however, which is long-lived, can always afford to wait; and Schopenhauer, with something of the complacency of genius that is in advance of its era, held his fingers on the public pulse and noted the quickening which precedes a return to consciousness. Germany was waking from her torpor. Already the influence of Hegel had begun to wane; his school was split into factions, and his philosophy, which in solving every problem had left the world nothing to do but to bore itself to death, was slowly falling into disrepute. Moreover, the great class of unattached scholars and independent thinkers, who cared as little for University dogmas as they did for the threats of the Vatican, were earnestly watching for some new teacher.

Schopenhauer was watching too; he knew that a change was coming, and that he would come in with the change. He had but to wait. "My extreme unction," he said, "will be my baptism; my death, a canonization."

Meanwhile old age had come upon him unawares, but with it the rich fruition of lifelong study and reflection. The perfect tranquility in which he passed his days had been utilized in strengthening and expanding his work, and in 1843, in his fifty-sixth year, the second and complementary volume of his philosophy was completed.

Twelve months later he wrote to Brockhaus, his publisher:—

"I may tell you in confidence that I am so well

pleased with this second volume, now that I see it in print, that I really think it will be a great success.... If, now, in return for this great work, you are willing to do me a very little favor, and one that is easily performed, I will beg you each Easter to let me know how many copies have been sold."

For two years he heard nothing, then in answer to a letter from him, Brockhaus wrote:—

"In reply to your inquiry concerning the sale of your book, I can only tell you that, to my sorrow, I have made a very poor business out of it. Further particulars I cannot enter into."

"Many a rose," Schopenhauer murmured, as he refolded the note and turned to other things.

In 1850, when, after six years' daily labor, he had completed his last work, "Parerga und Paralipomena," his literary reputation was still so insignificant that Brockhaus refused to publish it. Schopenhauer then offered it, unavailingly, to half a dozen other publishers. No one would have anything to do with it; the name which it bore would have frightened a pirate, and the boldest in the guild was afraid to examine its contents. "One thing is certain," said Schopenhauer, reflectively, "I am unworthy of my contemporaries, or they of me." The "Parerga," however, in spite of the lack of allurement in its title, was not destined to wither in manuscript. After much reconnoitring a publisher was discovered in Berlin who, unwillingly, consented to produce it, and thereupon two volumes of the most original and entertaining essays were given to the public. For this work Schopenhauer received ten copies in full payment.

Meanwhile a few adherents had rallied about him. Brockhaus, in an attempt to make the best of a bad bargain, had marked the "Welt" down to the lowest possible price, and a few copies had in consequence fallen into intelligent hands. Among its readers there were some who came to Frankfort to make the author's acquaintance; a proceeding which pleased, yet alarmed Schopenhauer not a little.

One of them wrote to people with whom he was unacquainted, advising them to read the work at once. "He is a fanatic," said Schopenhauer, in complacent allusion to him, "a fanatic, that's what he is."

Dr. Gwinner, his subsequent biographer, whom he met about this time, was his apostle, while Dr. Frauenstadt, another Boswell, whose acquaintance he made at *table d'hôte*, he called his arch-evangelist, and, not without pathos, repeated to him Byron's seductive lines,—

> "In the desert a fountain is springing,
> In the white waste there still is a tree,
> And a bird in the solitude singing,
> That speaks to my spirit of thee."

These gentlemen, together with a few others, made up a little band of sturdy disciples, who went about wherever they could, speaking and writing of the merits of Schopenhauer's philosophy. But the first note of acclamation which, historically speaking, was destined to arouse the thinking world, came, curiously enough, from England.

In 1853 the "Westminster Review" published a long and laudatory article on Schopenhauer's philosophy; and this article Lindner, the editor of the "Vossiche

Zeitung," to whom Schopenhauer had given the title of *doctor indefatigabilis*, reproduced in his own journal. In the following year Dr. Frauenstadt published, in a well-written pamphlet[3] which only needed a little more order and symmetry to be a valuable handbook, a complete exposition of the doctrine; and the applause thus stimulated reëchoed all over Germany. The "Welt als Wille und Vorstellung," the "World as Will and Idea," which for so many years had lain neglected, was dragged from its musty shelf like a Raphael from a lumber-room; and the fame to which Schopenhauer had not made a single step came to him as fame should, unsought and almost unbidden.

"My old age," he said, "is brighter now than most men's youth, for time has brought its roses at last; but see," he added, touching his silvered hair, "they are white."

From all sides now came evidences of the most cordial recognition. The reviews and weeklies published anecdotes about him and extracts from his works. Indeed, it was evident that the Iron Mask had escaped, and that to Caspar Hauser light and air had at last been accorded. Thinkers, scholars, and philosophers, of all creeds and colors, became his attentive readers. Decorations were offered to him, which he unostentatiously refused. The Berlin Academy, within whose walls Hegel had reigned supreme, invited him to become one of its faculty. This honor he also declined. "They have turned their back on me all my life," he said, "and after my death they want my name to adorn their catalogues." His philosophy was lectured upon at Breslau, and the University of Leipsic offered it as a subject for a prize essay. All this was very pleasant. Much to his

indignation, however, for he was by nature greatly disinclined to serve as pastime to an idle public, the "Illustrirte Zeitung" published his likeness, and added insult to injury by printing his name with two p's. Ah! how truly has it been said that fame consists in seeing one's name spelt wrong in the newspapers!

One of the most flattering manifestations of this sudden vogue was the curiosity of the public, the number of enthusiasts that visited him, and the eagerness with which artists sought to preserve his features for posterity. To all this concert of praise it is difficult to say that Schopenhauer lent a rebellious ear. The success of his philosophy of disenchantment enchanted him. He accepted with the seriousness of childhood the bouquets and sonnets which rained in upon him on his subsequent birthdays, and in his letters to Frauenstadt alluded to his ascending glory with innocent and amusing satisfaction:—

FRANKFORT, *September 23, 1854.*

> ... A fortnight ago, a Dr. K., a teacher, came to see me; he entered the room and looked so fixedly at me that I began to be frightened, and then he cried out, "I must look at you, I will look at you, I came to look at you." He was most enthusiastic. My philosophy, he told me, restored him to life. What next?...

June 29, 1855.

> ... B. called to-day; he had been here for twenty-four hours under an assumed name, and after many hesitations came in a closed carriage to pay his respects.... On taking leave, he kissed my hand. I screamed with

fright....

August 17, 1855.

... My portrait, painted by Lunteschütz, is finished and sold. Wiesike saw it in time, and bought it while it was still on the easel. But the unheard-of part of the whole matter is that he told me, and Lunteschütz too, that he was going to build a temple on purpose for it. That will be the first chapel erected in my honor. Recitativo, "Ja, ja, Sarastro herrschet hier."[4] What will be said of me, I wonder, in the year 2100?...

September, 1855.

... Received a number of visits. Baehr, the Dresden painter and professor, came; he is a charming fellow, and pleased me very much. He knows all my works, and is full of them. He says, at Dresden every one is interested in them, especially the women, who, it appears, read me with passionate delight. Hornstein, a young composer, came also; he is a pupil of Richard Wagner, who, it seems, is also one of my students. Hornstein is still here, and pays me an exaggerated respect; for instance, when I want my waiter, he rises from table to summon him.... My portrait has been for a fortnight at the exposition. There has been a great crowd to see it. Von Launitz, the Frankfort Phidias, wants to take my bust....

December 23, 1855.

... A gentleman has written to me from Zurich to say that in the club to which he

belongs my works are read with such admiration that the members are crazy to get a picture of me of any kind, nature, or description, and that the artist who takes it has but to forward it C. O. D.... You see that my fame is spreading like a conflagration, and not in arithmetical ratio either, but in geometric, and even cubic....

March 28, 1856.

... R., too, kissed my hand,—a ceremony to which I cannot accustom myself; yet it is one, I suppose, that forms part of my imperial dignity....

June 6, 1856.

... Becher sent his son and nephew here, and Baehr sent his son also, and that only that these young people may in their old age be able to boast that they had seen and spoken to me....

June 11, 1856.

... Professor Baehr, of Dresden, was here yesterday, and, penetrated with the most praiseworthy enthusiasm, wished to exchange his beautiful silver snuff-box for my forlorn old leather one. I refused, however. He told me of a certain Herr von Wilde, who was a perfect fanatic on the subject of my philosophy, and who, at the age of eighty-five, died with my name on his lips.

My Buddha, re-gilded, glittering on his pedestal, gives you his benediction.

August 14, 1856.

> ... Four pages and a half of Tallendier about me.[5] You have seen it, I suppose. French chatter, personal details, etc., but where the devil did he hear that I am "tout etonné du bruit que font mes écrits dans le monde?" I am so little astonished, that Emden told Nordwall, to the latter's intense surprise, that I had predicted to him my future celebrity fully twenty years ago....

Now, mediocrity may, of course, be praised, but, as Balzac has put it, it is never discussed. And Schopenhauer, in the matter of discussion, came in for his full share. He was praised and abused by turn. Like every prominent figure, he made a good mark to fire at. Certain critics said that he had stolen from Fichte and Schelling everything in his philosophy that was worth reading, others abused him personally; and one writer, a woman with whom he had refused to converse, and who had probably expected to pay her hotel bill with the protocol of his conversation, wrote a quantity of scurrilous articles about him. But *censura perit, scriptum manet.* The criticisms are forgotten, while his work still endures and, moreover, grows each year into surer and stronger significance.

Among his visitors at the time was M. Foucher de Carsil, and the portrait which that gentleman subsequently drew of him is so graphic that it is impossible to resist the temptation of making the following extract:[6]—

> "When I first saw him, in 1859, at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, at Frankfort, he was then an old man, with bright blue and limpid eyes. His

lips were thin and sarcastic, and about them wandered a smile of shrewd intelligence. His high forehead was tufted on either side with puffs of white hair that gave to his physiognomy, luminous as it was with wit and malice, a stamp of nobility and distinction. His garments, his lace *jabot*, his white cravat, reminded me of that school of gentlemen who lived toward the close of the reign of Louis XV. His manners were those of a man accustomed to the best society; habitually reserved and timid even to suspicion, he rarely entered into conversation with any save his intimates and an occasional sympathetic traveler. His gestures were abrupt, and in conversation they became at once petulant and suggestive. He avoided discussions and combats in words, but he did so that he might the better enjoy the charm of familiar conversation. When he did speak, his imagination embroidered on the heavy canvas of the German tongue the most subtle and delicate arabesques that the Latin, Greek, French, English, or Italian languages were capable of suggesting. Indeed, when he cared to talk, his conversation possessed swing and precision, and joined thereto was a wealth of citation, an exactitude of detail, and such tireless flow of wit, as held the little circle of his friends charmed and attentive until far into the night. His words, clear-cut and cadenced, captivated his listener wholly: they both pictured and analyzed, a tremulous sensitiveness heightened their fervor, they were precise and exact on every topic. A

> German, who had traveled extensively in Abyssinia, was so astonished at the minute details which he gave on the different species of crocodiles, and their customs, that he thought that in him he recognized a former companion.
>
> "Happy are they who heard this last survivor of the conversationalists of the eighteenth century! He was a contemporary of Voltaire and of Diderot, of Helvetius and of Chamfort; his brilliant thoughts on women, on the part that mothers hold in the intellectual qualities of their children; his theories, profoundly original, on the connection between will and mind; his views on art and nature, on the life and death of the species; his remarks on the dull and wearisome style of those who write to say nothing, or who put on a mask and think with the thoughts of others; his pungent reflections on the subject of pseudonyms, and on the establishment of a literary censure for those journals which permitted neologisms, solecisms, and barbarisms; his ingenious hypotheses on magnetic phenomena, dreams, and somnambulism; his hatred of excess of every kind; his love of order; and his horror of obscurantism, 'qui, s'il n'est pas un péché contre le Saint Esprit en est un contre l'esprit humain,' make for him a physiognomy entirely different from any other of this century."

A few tags and tatters of these conversations have been preserved by Dr. Frauenstadt,[7] and in them Schopenhauer is discovered sprawled at ease, and

expressing himself on a variety of topics with a *disinvoltura* and freedom of epithet which recalls the earlier essayists. With them, as with him, periphrasis was avoided. Spades were spades, not horticultural implements; and in one dialogue Frauenstadt compliments his master in having, in breadth and reach of his polemic, nothing in common with contemporary regard for ears polite. Citations of this class, however, may well be omitted. A thinker in slippers, and especially *in puris naturalibus*, is generally unattractive even to those the least given to prudishness. But beyond certain instances of this description, the scholar and man of the world is usually very discernible. At times he is profound, at others vivacious; for instance, he is asked what man would be if Nature, in making the last step which leads to him, had started from the dog or the elephant; to which he answers, in that case man would be an intelligent dog or an intelligent elephant, instead of being an intelligent monkey. As may be imagined, there was about Schopenhauer very little of the Sunday-school theologian, and religion was in consequence seldom viewed by him from an orthodox standpoint; when, therefore, Schleiermacher was quoted before him to the effect that no man can be a philosopher who is not religious, he observed very quietly, "No man who is religious can become a philosopher,—metaphysics are useless to him, and no true philosopher is religious; he is sometimes in danger, but he is not fettered, he is free." Elsewhere he said, "Religion and philosophy are like the two scales of a balance; the more one rises, the more does the other descend."

In Schopenhauer's opinion, the greatest novels were "Tristram Shandy," "Wilhelm Meister," "Don Quixote," and the "Nouvelle Héloïse." To "Don Quixote" he

ascribed an allegorical meaning, but as an intellectual romance he preferred "Wilhelm Meister" to all others. He believed in clairvoyance, but not that man is a free agent; and it may be here noted that, according to the most recent scientific opinion, man is a free agent, *at most*, about once in twenty-four hours. "Everything that happens, happens necessarily," he would say; and it was with this maxim, of whose truth he had a variety of every-day examples, and with the aid of the theory of the ideality of time, that he explained second sight. "Everything is now that is to be," he said; "but with our ordinary eyes we do not see it; the clairvoyant merely puts on the spectacles of Time."

In the "Paränesen und Maximen," in which Schopenhauer chats quietly with the reader and not with the disciple, many quaint and forcible suggestions are to be found. For instance, among other things, he says, "I accord my entire respect to any man who, when unoccupied, and waiting for something, does not immediately begin to beat a tattoo with his fingers, or toy with the object nearest his hand. It is probable that such a man has thoughts of his own." His advice, too, on the manner in which we should think and work is quite Emersonian in its directness. It was, it may be added, the manner in which he thought and worked, himself: "Have compartments for your thoughts and open but one of them at a time; in this way each little pleasure you may have will not be spoiled by some lumbering care; neither will one thought drive out another, and an important matter will not swamp a lot of smaller ones."

Such, vaguely outlined, was this great and interesting figure. With the appearance of the "Parerga" his work

was done. He lived ten years longer in great seclusion, receiving only infrequent visits. "There, where two or three are gathered together," he would say, and suggested that his friends and believers should meet and consult without him. Such literary labor as he then performed consisted mainly in strengthening that which he had already written, and in making notes and suggestions for future editions. At the age of seventy-two he died, very peacefully though suddenly, leaving all his fortune to charitable purposes.

In these pages no attempt has been made to enter into the details of biography, for that pleasant task has been already well performed by other and better equipped pens. The present writer has therefore only sought to present such a view of Schopenhauer as might aid the general reader to a clearer understanding of the doctrine which he was the first to present, and which will be briefly considered in the next chapter.

FOOTNOTES:

[3] *Briefe über die Schopenhauer'sche Philosophie.*

[4] "Yes, yes, Sarastro reigns herein."—Air from the *Magic Flute*.

[5] An article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

[6] *Hegel et Schopenhauer*. Paris: Hachette et Cie.

[7] *Arthur Schopenhauer. Von ihm, Ueber ihn.* Berlin.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPHINX'S RIDDLE.

In the Munich beer halls, when one student is heard laying down the law about something which he does not understand to a companion who cares not a rap on the subject, it is very generally taken for granted that the two are talking metaphysics. Indeed, metaphysics has a bad name everywhere. In itself, it suggests nothing very enticing, and even its nomenclature seems to bring with it a sort of ponderosity which is very nearly akin to the repulsive.

This prejudice, of course, is not without its reason. The philosophers, nearly one and all, seem to have banded themselves into a sort of imaginary freemasonry, whose portals they bar to any one refusing to robe his thoughts in a garment of technical speech. Moreover, at the very gateway of their guild there looms before the timorous the fear of a hideous initiation, the cold douche of logic, and the memorizing of hateful terms. There can therefore be no stronger proof of Schopenhauer's ability than that which is contained in the fact that he successfully eluded all these stale abuses, and turned one of the heaviest kinds of writing into one of the most agreeable.

Indeed, Schopenhauer is not only one of the most profound thinkers of the essentially profound nineteenth century, but, what is still more

noteworthy, he is an exceptionably fascinating teacher. His spacious theories and tangential flights are, of course, not such as charm the reader of the penny dreadful; but any one who is interested in the drama of evolution and the tragi-comedy of life will, it is believed, find in him a fund of curious information, such as no other thinker has had the power to convey.

He has, it is true, made the most of the worst; but beyond this reproach, but one other of serious import remains to be brought against him, and that is that though he has been dead and buried for very nearly a quarter of a century, he is still on the outer margin of his epoch. For this he is not, of course, entirely to blame. There are among thinkers many pleasant optimists still, who form a respectable majority; to be sure, a wise man once said that in considering a new subject the minority were always right; but, disregarding for the moment the fallacy of believing that this world is the best one possible, it cannot but be admitted that scientific pessimism is still in its infancy. It has yet many prejudices to disarm, and many errors of its own to correct. Like meaner things, it must mature. For this it has ample time.

Berkeley says that few men think, yet all have opinions; and it is now very frequently asserted that when more is thought, not only there will not be such a diversity of opinion, but at that time Pessimism, as the religion of the future, will begin its sway.

It has been elsewhere noted that the effect of Kant's philosophy was not dissimilar to that of a successful operation on cataract, and the aim of the "World as Will and Idea" is to place in the hands of those on

whom that operation has been satisfactorily performed a pair of such spectacles as are suitable to convalescent eyes. Schopenhauer is therefore in a measure indebted to Kant, as also, it may be added, to Plato, and the sacred books of the Hindus.

In saying, however, that Schopenhauer is indebted to Kant, it is well to point out that Schopenhauer begins precisely where Kant left off. Kant's great merit consisted in distinguishing the phenomenon from the thing-in-itself, or in other words, in showing the difference between that which seems and that which is.[8] For the inaccessible thing-in-itself he had no explanation to offer. He called it the *Ding an sich*, regarded it as the result of an unintelligible cause, and then left it to be a bugbear to every student of his philosophy.

This unpleasant *Ding an sich* was exorcised, and well-nigh banished for good and all, by Fichte and Hegel; but Schopenhauer reëstablished the incomprehensible factor on a fresh basis, christened it "Will," and asserted it to be the creator of all that is, and at once independent, free, and omnipotent; in other words, the interior essence of the world of which Christ crucified is the sublime symbol. Thus disposed of, the *Ding an sich* may now be left to take care of itself, and the examination of the great theory begun.

Schopenhauer opens his philosophy with the formula, "The world is my idea;" a formula which, it may be noted, condenses in the fewest possible words all that is worth condensing of the idealism of Germany. Beginning in this manner it is evident that he proposes to show neither whence the world comes nor whither it tends, nor yet why it is, but simply,

what it is. The question has been asked before. According to Schopenhauer, the world is made up of two zones, the real and the ideal; and it may here be said that over the real and the ideal Schopenhauer successfully read the banns.

To return, however, to the opening formula. "The world is my idea" is a truth which holds good for everything that lives and thinks, but which, however, is appreciable only by man. When appreciated, it is at once clear that what we know is neither a sun nor an earth, for we have at best an eye which sees the one, and a hand which feels the other. In brief, we are unacquainted with either forms or colors; we have but senses which represent them to us, while objects exist for us merely through the medium of the intelligence. Indeed, as Schopenhauer has said, no other truth is more certain and less in need of proof than this,—that the whole world is simply the perception of a perceiver; in a word, idea.

Emerson says that the frivolous make themselves merry with this theory; and it must be admitted that at first it does not seem quite satisfactory to be told that the world in which we live is nothing more nor less than a cerebral phenomenon, which man carries with him to the tomb, and which, in the absence of a perceiver, would not exist at all. To arrive, however, at a clear understanding of the purely phenomenal existence of the exterior world, it will suffice to represent to one's self the world as it was when entirely uninhabited. At that time it was necessarily without perception. Later, there sprang up a great quantity of plants, upon which the different forces of light, air, humidity, and electricity acted according to their nature. If, now, it be remembered how impressionable plants are to these agents, and how

thought leads by degrees to sensation and thence to perception, immediately then the world appears representing itself in time and space. Or, reverse the argument and imagine that the dream of the poet is realized, that nations have disappeared, and that every living thing has ceased to be, while beneath the sun's unchanging stare, and enveloped in the sky's bland, pervasive blue, the earth with her continents and archipelagoes continues to revolve in space. Under such circumstances it would naturally seem as though the universe subsisted still. But if the question is examined more closely, it will perhaps be admitted that these things remain as they are only on condition of being seen and felt. For supposing one spectator present, but of a different mental organization from our own, then the entire scene is changed; suppress him, and the whole spectacle tumbles into chaos.

This doctrine, as it will be readily understood, does not in any sense deny the reality of the world in the ordinary acceptation of the term; it maintains merely that every object is conditioned by its subject; or, to explain the theory less technically, it will be sufficient to reflect that for the world, or for anything else, to be an object, there must be some one as subject to think it; for instance, the dreamless sleep proves that the earth exists only to the thinking mind, and should all Nature be rocked in an eternal slumber, there could then be no question of an exterior world.

If it be asked in what this perception consists, which represents the exterior world, we find that it is limited to three fundamental concepts, that of time, space, and their concomitant causality; but inasmuch as time and space are the receptacle of every

phenomenon, once their ideality is established, the ideality of the world is proven at the same moment, and with it the truth of the formula, "The world is my idea."

Now the ideality of time is established, according to Schopenhauer, by what is known in mechanics as the law of inertia. "For what," he asks in the "Parerga," "does this law teach? Simply, that time alone cannot produce any physical action, that alone and in itself it alters nothing either in the repose or movement of a body. Were it either accidentally or otherwise inherent in things themselves, it would follow that its duration or brevity would affect them in a certain measure. But it does nothing of the sort; time passes over all things without leaving the slightest trace, for they are acted upon only by the causes that unroll themselves *in* time, but in no sense by time itself. When, therefore, a body is withdrawn from chemical action, as the mammoth in the ice fields, the fly in amber, and the Egyptian antiquities in their closed necropoli, thousands of years may pass and leave them unaffected. Indeed," he adds elsewhere, "the living toads found in limestone lead to the conclusion that even animal life may be suspended for thousands of years, provided this suspension is begun in the dormant period and maintained by special circumstances."

The "London Times," 21st September, 1840, contains a notice to the effect that, at a lecture delivered by Mr. Pettigrew, at the Literary and Scientific Institute, the lecturer showed some grains of wheat which Sir G. Wilkenson had found in a grave at Thebes, where they must have lain for three thousand years. They were found in an hermetically sealed vase. Mr. Pettigrew had sowed twelve grains, and obtained a

plant which grew five feet high, and the seeds of which were then quite ripe.

Many other instances are given of this absolute inactivity; for example, let a body once be put in motion, that motion is never arrested or diminished by any lapse of time; it would be never ending were it not for the reaction of physical causes. In the same manner a body in repose would remain so eternally did not physical causes put it in motion. It follows, therefore, that time is not a real existence, but only a condition of thought, or purely ideal.

In regard to the ideality of space, Schopenhauer says, "The clearest and most simple proof of the ideality of space is that we can never get it out of our thoughts, as we might anything else. We can fancy space as having no longer anything to fill it, we can imagine that everything within it has disappeared, we can represent it as being, between the fixed stars, an absolute void, but space itself we can never get rid of; whatever we do, however we turn, there it is in endless expansion. This fact certainly proves that space is a part of our intellect; or, in other words, that it is the woof of the tissue upon which the different objects of the exterior world apply themselves. As soon as I think of an object, space appears with it and accompanies every movement, every turn and *détour* of my thought, as faithfully as the spectacles on my nose accompany every movement, every turn and *détour* of my person, or just in the same manner as the shadow accompanies the body. If I notice that a thing accompanies me everywhere, and under all circumstances, I naturally conclude that it is in some way connected with me; as if, for instance, wherever I went I noticed a particular odor from which I could not escape. Space

is precisely the same; whatever I think of, what ever I imagine, space comes first and yields its place to nothing. It must, therefore, be an integral part of my understanding, and its ideality in consequence must extend to everything that is thinkable."

Space and time being but the empty framework of phenomenal existence, something must fill them, and that something is causality, which, according to Schopenhauer, is synonymous with action and matter. Into these abstract regions, however, it is unnecessary to follow him any further. Suffice it to say that having shown in this way that one of the two zones of which the world is formed is but an effect of the perceptions, he passes therefrom to the world as it is.

Now there were many paths which might or might not have led him to the unravelment of the great secret which Kant gave up in despair, there were many ways which seemed to tend to a direct solution of the Sphinx's riddle, but the course which he chose, and which brought him nearer to the proper answer than any other system of which the world yet knows, may be fairly said to have been inspired by the spirit of truth, and as an inspiration given first to him of all men.

It was not mathematics that he selected to aid him in his search for the real, for whatever the subtleties of that science may be, it is still too superficial to contain an explorable depth. The natural sciences could aid him as little. Anatomy, botany, and zoölogy reveal, it is true, an infinite variety of forms, but these forms at best are but unrelated perceptions, a series of indecipherable hieroglyphics. Even etiology, when embracing the whole range of

physical science, gives at most but the nomenclature, succession, and changes of inexplicable forces, without revealing anything of their inner nature. All these methods were smitten with the same defect,—they were all external, and offered not the essence of things, but only their image and description. To employ them, therefore, in a search for truth would, he said, be on a par with a man who, wandering about a castle looking vainly for the entrance, takes meanwhile a sketch of the façade. Such, however, he noted, is the method which all other philosophers have followed. He concluded, therefore, as man was not only a thinking being, to whom the world was merely an idea, but an individual riveted to the earth by a body whose affections were the starting-point of his intuitions, that reality would come to him, not from without, but from within. "For this body of man's is," he argued, "but an object among other objects; its movements and actions are unknown to the thinking being save as are the changes of the others, and they would be as incomprehensible to him as his own were not their signification revealed to him in another manner. He would see movements follow motives with the constancy of a natural law, and would as little understand the influence of the motive as the connection of any other effect with its cause. He could, if he chose, call it force, quality, or character, but that is all that he would know about it."

What, then, is the interior essence of every manifestation and of every action? What is that which is identical with the body to such an extent that to its command a movement always answers? What is that with which Nature plays, which works dumbly in the rock, slumbers in the plant, and awakes in man? Schopenhauer answers with a word,

"Will." Will, he teaches, is a force, and should not be taken, as it is ordinarily, to mean simply the conscious act of an intelligent being. In Nature it is a blind, unconscious power; in man it is the foundation of being.

But before entering into an examination of the functions and vagaries of this force, of which everything, from a cataclysm to a blade of grass, is a derivative, it is well to inquire what its exact rank is. It has been already said that in man it was the foundation of being, but from very early times,—as a matter of fact, since the days in which Anaxagoras lived and taught,—the intellect has held, among all man's other attributes, a sceptre hitherto uncontested. If Schopenhauer, however, is to be believed, the supremacy hitherto accorded to it has been the result of error. The throne, by grace divine, belongs to Will. The intellect is but the prime minister, the instrument of a higher force, as the hammer is that of the smith.

If the matter be examined however casually, it will become at once clear that what we are most conscious of in effort, hope, desire, fear, love, hatred, and determination, are the workings and manifestations of Will. If the animal is considered, it will be seen that in the descending scale intelligence becomes more and more imperfect, while Will remains entirely unaffected. The smallest insect wants what it wants as much as man. The intellect, moreover, becomes wearied, while Will is indefatigable. Indeed, when it is remembered that such men as Swift, Kant, Scott, Southey, Rousseau, and Emerson have fallen into a state of intellectual debility, it is well-nigh impossible to deny that the mind is but a function of the body, which, in turn, is

a function of the Will. But that which probably shows the secondary and dependent nature of the intelligence more clearly is its peculiar characteristic of intermittence and periodicity. In deep sleep, the brain rests, while the other organs continue their work. In brief, then, Intellect is the light and Will the warmth. "In me," Schopenhauer says, "the indestructible is not the soul, but rather, to employ a chemical term, the basis of the soul, which is Will."

Will, moreover, is not only the foundation of being, but, as has been noted, it is the universal essence. Schopenhauer points out the ascension of sap in plants, which is no easy problem in hydraulics, and the insect's marvelous anticipations of the future, and asks what is it all but Will? The vital force itself, he says, is Will,—Will to live,—while the organism of the body is but Will manifested, Will become visible.

As Schopenhauer describes it, Will is also identical, immutable, and free. Its identity is shown in inorganic life in the irresistible *tendency* of water to precipitate itself into cavities, the *perseverance* with which the loadstone turns to the north, the *longing* that iron has to attach itself to it, the violence with which contrary currents of electricity *try* to unite the *choice* of fluids, and in the manner in which they join and separate. In organic life, it is shown by the fact that every vegetable has a peculiar characteristic: one wants a damp soil, another needs a dry one; one grows only on high ground, another in the valley; one turns to the light, another to the water; while the climbing plant seeks a support. In the animal kingdom there exists another form, which is noticeable in the partly voluntary, partly involuntary movements of the lowest type. When, however, in the evolution of Will the insect or the animal seeks

and chooses its food, then intelligence begins and volition passes from darkness into light.

Will, too, is immutable. It never varies; it is the same in man as in the caterpillar, for, as has been said, what an insect wants it wants as decidedly as does a man; the only difference is in the object of desire. The immutability of Will, moreover, is the base of its indestructibility; it never perishes, and for that matter what does? In the world of phenomena all things, it is true, seem to have a birth and a death, but that is but an illusion, which the philosopher does not share. Our true being, and the veritable essence of all things, dwell, Schopenhauer says, in a region where time is not, and where the concepts of birth and death are without significance. The fear of death, he adds parenthetically, is a purely independent sentiment, and one which has its origin in the Will to live. Briefly, it is an illusion which man brings with him when he is born, and which guides him through life; for notice that were this fear of death perfectly reasonable, man would be as uneasy about the chaos which preceded his existence as about that which is to follow it.

Let the individual die, however; the species is indestructible, for death is to the species as sleep is to the individual. The species contains the indestructible, the immutable Will of which the individual is a manifestation. It contains all that is, all that was, and all that will be.

"When we think of the future and of the coming generations, the millions of human beings who will differ from us in habits and customs, and we try in imagination to fancy them with us, we wonder from where they will spring, where they are now? Where

is this fecund chaos, rich in worlds, that hides the generations that are to be? And where can it be save there, where every reality has been and will be,—here, in the present, and what it contains. And you, foolish questioner, who do not recognize your own essence, you are like the leaf on the tree which, withering in autumn, and feeling it is about to fall, laments at death, inconsolable at the knowledge of the fresh verdure which in spring will cover the tree once more. The leaf cries, 'I am no more.' Foolish leaf, where do you go? Whence do the fresh leaves come? Where is this chaos whose gulf you fear? See, your own self is in that force, interior and hidden, acting on the tree which, through all generations of leaves, knows neither birth nor death. And now tell me," Schopenhauer concludes, as though he were about to pronounce a benediction, "tell me, is man unlike the leaf?"

This doctrine, which teaches that through all there is one invariable, identical, and equal force, is the great problem whose solution was sought by Kant, and which he gave up in despair; it is the discovery which makes of Schopenhauer one of the foremost thinkers of the century, and one, it may be added without any unguarded enthusiasm, which will suffice to carry his name into other ages, somewhat in the same manner as the name of Columbus has descended to us.

"If we were to consider," he said, "the nature of this force which admittedly moves the world, but whose psychological examination is so little advanced that the most certain analytical results seem not unlike a paradox, we should be astonished at this fundamental verity which I have been the first to bring to light, and to which I have given its true

name,—Will. For what is the world but an enormous Will constantly irrupting into life. Gravitation, electricity, heat, every form of activity, from the fall of an apple to the foundation of a republic, is but the expression of Will, and nothing more."

This doctrine of volition coincides, it may be noted, very perfectly with that of evolution, and it was not difficult for Schopenhauer to show that the more recent results of science were a confirmation of his philosophy. In the "Parerga," which he wrote thirty years after the publication of his chief work, he says that during the early stages of the globe's formation, before the age of granite, the objectivity of the Will-to-live was limited to the most inferior forms; also that the forces were at that time engaged in a combat whose theatre was not alone the surface of the globe, but its entire mass, a combat too colossal for the imagination to grasp. When this Titan conflict of chemical forces had ended, and the granite, like a tombstone, covered the combatants, the Will-to-live, by a striking contrast, irrupted in the peaceful world of plant and forest. This vegetable world decarbonized the air, and prepared it for animal life. The objectivity of Will then realized a new form,—the animal kingdom. Fish and crustaceans filled the sea, gigantic reptiles covered the earth, and gradually through innumerable forms, each more perfect than the last, the Will-to-live ascended finally to man. This stage attained is, in his opinion, destined to be the last, for with it is come the possibility of the denial of the Will, through which the divine comedy will end.

This possibility of the denial of the Will, and the ransom of the world from its attendant misery thereby, will be explained later on, and for the

moment it will be sufficient to note that Schopenhauer refused to admit that a being more intelligent than man could exist either here or on any other planet, for with enlarged intelligence he would consider life too deplorable to be supported for a single moment.

If, now, the foregoing arguments are admitted, and it is taken for granted that there are two separate and distinct hemispheres, one apparent and one real, one the world of perceptions and one the world of Will, there must necessarily be some connection between the two, some point at which they meet and join. This chasm Schopenhauer lightly bridges over with those ideas of Plato which the Middle Ages neglected, and which formed the banquet and the sustenance of the Renaissance: in fact, the eternal yet ever fresh suggestions that Nature offers to the artist, and which the sculptor with his chisel, the poet with his pen, the painter with his brush, resuscitate and explain anew.

It is, however, only in the purest contemplation that these suggestions can be properly received, and it is, of course, in genius that a preëminent capacity for such receptivity exists. For it is as if when genius appears in an individual, a larger measure of the power of knowledge falls to his lot than is necessary for the service of an individual will, and this superfluity, being free, becomes, as it were, the mirror of the inner nature of the world, or, as Carlyle puts it, "the spiritual picture of Nature." "This," Schopenhauer notes parenthetically, "explains the restless activity of the genius, for the present can rarely satisfy him, because it does not fill his thoughts. There is in him a ceaseless aspiration and desire for new and lofty things, and a longing to

meet and communicate with others of similar status. The common mortal, on the other hand, filled with the hour, ends in it, and finding everywhere his like enjoys that satisfaction in daily life from which the genius is debarred."

The common mortal, the *bourgeois*, as it is the fashion to call him, turned out as he is daily by the thousand, manufactured, it would seem, to order, finds in his satisfied mediocrity no glimmer, even, of a spark that can predispose him to disinterested observation. Whatever arrests his attention does so only for the moment, and in all that appears before him he seeks merely the general concept under which it is to be brought, very much in the same manner as the indolent seek a chair, which then interests them no further.

And yet it is unnecessary to pore over German metaphysics to know that whoso can lose himself in Nature, and sink his own individuality therein, finds that it has suddenly become a suggestion, which he has absorbed, and which is now part of himself. It is in this sense that Byron says:—

"Are not the mountains, waves, and skies
a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?"

This theory, it is true, is not that of all great poets, many of whom, as witness Shelley and Leopardi, did not see in the splendid face of Nature that they could not be absolutely perishable, and so selfishly mourned over their own weakness and her impassibility.

According to Schopenhauer, art should be strictly impersonal, and contemplation as calm as a foretaste of Nirvâna, in which the individual is effaced and only the pure knowing subject subsists. This condition he praises with great wealth of adjective as the painless state which Epicurus, of refined memory, celebrated as the highest good, the bliss of the gods, for therein "man is freed from the hateful yoke of Will, the penal servitude of daily life ceases as for a Sabbath, the wheel of Ixion stands still." The cause of all this he is at no loss to explain, and he does so, it may be added, in a manner poetically logical and peculiar to himself. "Every desire is born of a need, of a privation, or a suffering. When satisfied it is lulled, but for one that is satisfied how many are unappeased! Desire, moreover, is of long duration, its exigencies are infinite, while pleasure is brief and narrowly measured. Even this pleasure is only an apparition, another succeeds it; the first is a vanished illusion, the second an illusion which lingers still. Nothing is capable of appeasing Will, nor of permanently arresting it; the best we can do for ourselves is like the alms tossed to a beggar, which in preserving his life to-day prolongs his misery to-morrow. While, therefore, we are

dominated by desires and ruled by Will, so long as we give ourselves up to hopes that delude and fears that persecute, we have neither repose nor happiness. But when an accident, an interior harmony, lifting us for the time from out the infinite torrent of desire, delivers the spirit from the oppression of the Will, turns our attention from everything that solicits it, and all things seem as freed from the allurements of hope and personal interest, then repose, vainly pursued, yet ever intangible, comes to us of itself, bearing with open hands the plenitude of the gift of peace."

The fine arts, therefore, as well as philosophy, are at work on the problem of existence. Every mind that has once rested in impersonal contemplation of the world tends from that moment to some comprehension of the mystery of beauty and the internal essence of all things; and it is for this reason that every new work which grapples forcibly with any actuality is one more answer to the question, What is life?

To this query every masterpiece replies, pertinently, but in its own manner. Art, which speaks in the ingenuous tongue of intuition, and not in the abstract speech of thought, answers the question with a passing image, but not with a definite reply. But every great work, be it a poem, a picture, a statue, or a play, answers still. Even music replies, and more profoundly than anything else. Indeed, art offers to him who questions an image born of intuition, which says, See, this is life.

Briefly, then, contemplation brings with it that affranchisement of the intelligence, which is not alone a release from the trammels of the Will, but

which is the law of art itself, and raises man out of misery into the pure world of ideas.

In the treatment of this subject, which in the hands of other writers has been productive of inexpressible weariness, Schopenhauer has given himself no airs. In what has gone before there has been, it must be admitted, no attempt to narrate history, and then pass it off as an explanation of the Universe. He has gone to the root of the matter, seized a fact and brought it to light, without any nauseous accompaniment of "Absolutes" or "Supersensibles." In view of the magnitude of the subject, it has been handled, I think, very simply, and that perhaps for the reason that simplicity is the *cachet* which greatness lends to all its productions. If in these pages it has seemed otherwise, the fault is not that of the master, but rather that of the clerk.

The question as to what the world is has been considered, and the answer conveyed that Will, the essence of all things, is a blind, unconscious force which, after irrupting in inorganic life and passing therefrom through the vegetable and animal kingdom, reaches its culmination in man, and that the only relief from its oppressive yoke is found in art and impersonal contemplation. Taking these premises for granted, and admitting for a moment their corollary that life is a restless pain, it will be found that the sombre conclusion which follows therefrom has been deduced with an exactitude which is comparable only to the precision of a prism decomposing light.

Literature is admittedly full of the embarrassments of transition, and philosophy has naturally its attendant share. It is, of course, not difficult for the

metaphysician to say, This part of my work is theoretical, and this, practical; but to give to the two that cohesion which is necessary in the unfolding of a single, if voluminous, thought is a feat not always performed with success. It is, therefore, no little to Schopenhauer's credit that he triumphantly connected the two in such wise that they seem as though fused in one, and after disposing of the world at large was able to turn to life and its attendant, pain.

Now in all grades of its manifestation, Will, he teaches, dispenses entirely with any end or aim; it simply and ceaselessly strives, for striving is its sole nature. As, however, any hindrance of this striving, through an obstacle placed between it and its temporary aim, is called suffering, and on the other hand the attainment of its end, satisfaction, well-being, or happiness, it follows, if the obstacles it meets outnumber the facilities it encounters, that having no final end or aim, there can be no end and no measure of suffering.

But does pain outbalance happiness? The question is certainly complex, and for that matter unanswerable save by a cumbersome mathematical process from which the reader may well be spared. The optimist points to the pleasures of life, the pessimist enumerates its trials. Each judges according to his lights. Schopenhauer's opinion goes without the telling, and as he gave his whole life to the subject his verdict may, for the moment, be allowed to pass unchallenged. Still, if the question is examined, no matter how casually, it will be seen, first, that there is no sensibility in the plant and therefore no suffering; second, that a certain small degree is manifested in the lowest types of animal life; third,

that the capacity to feel and suffer is still limited, even in the case of the most intelligent insects; fourth, that pain of an acute degree first appears with the nervous system of the vertebrates; fifth, that it continues to increase in direct proportion to the development of the intelligence; and, finally, that as intelligence attains distinctness, pain advances with it, and what Mr. Swinburne calls the gift of tears finds its supreme expression in man. Truly, as Schopenhauer has expressed it, man is not a being to be greatly envied. He is the concretion of a thousand necessities. His life, as a rule, is a struggle for existence with the certainty of defeat in the end, and when his existence is assured, there comes a fight with the burden of life, an effort to kill time, and a vain attempt to escape ennui.

Nor is ennui a minor evil. It is not every one who can get away from himself. Schopenhauer could, it is true, but in so doing he noted that its ravages depicted on the human countenance an expression of absolute despair, and made beings who love one another as little as men do seek each other eagerly. "It drives men," he said, "to the greatest excesses, as does famine, its opposite extreme. Public precautions are taken against it as against other calamities, hence the historical *panem et circenses*. Want," he added, "is the scourge of the people as ennui is that of fashionable life. In the middle classes ennui is represented by the Sabbath, and want by the other days of the week."

In this way, between desire and attainment, human life rolls on. The wish is, in its nature, pain, and satisfaction soon begets satiety. No matter what nature and fortune may have done, no matter who a man may be, nor what he may possess, the pain

which is essential to life can never be dodged. Efforts to banish suffering effect, if successful, only a change in its form. In itself it is want or care for the maintenance of life; and if in this form it is at last and with difficulty removed, back it comes again in the shape of love, jealousy, lust, envy, hatred, or ambition; and if it can gain entrance through none of these avatars, it comes as simple boredom, against which we strive as best we may. Even in this latter case, if at last we get the upper hand, we shall hardly do so, Schopenhauer says, "without letting pain in again in one of its earlier forms; and then the dance begins afresh, for life, like a pendulum, swings ever backward and forward between pain and ennui."

Depressing as this view of life may be, Schopenhauer draws attention to an aspect of it from which a certain consolation may be derived, and even a philosophic indifference to present ills be attained. Our impatience at misfortune, he notes, arises very generally from the fact that we regard it as having been caused by a chain of circumstances which might easily have been different. As a rule, we make little, if any, complaint over the ills that are necessary and universal; such, for instance, as the advance of age, and the death which must claim us all; on the contrary, it is the accidental nature of the sorrow that gives its sting. But if we were to recognize that pain is inevitable and essential to life, and that nothing depends on chance save only the form in which it presents itself, and that consequently the present suffering fills a place which without it would be occupied by another which it has excluded,—then, from convictions of this nature, a considerable amount of stoical equanimity would be produced, and the amount of anxious care which now pervades the world would be notably

diminished. But fortifications of this description, however cunningly devised, form no bulwark against pain itself; for pain, according to Schopenhauer, is positive, the one thing that is felt; while on the other hand, satisfaction, or, as it is termed, happiness, is a purely negative condition. Against this theory it is unnecessary to bring to bear any great battery of argument; many thinkers have disagreed with him on this point, as they have also disagreed with his assertion that pleasure is always preceded by a want. It is true, of course, that unexpected pleasures have a delight whose value is entirely independent of antecedent desire. But unexpected pleasures are rare; they do not come to us every day, and when they do they cease to be pleasures; indeed, their rarity may in this respect be looked upon as the exception which confirms the rule. Ample proof, however, of the negativity of happiness is found in art, and especially in poetry. Epic and dramatic verse represent struggles, efforts, and combats for happiness; but happiness itself, complete and enduring, is never depicted. Up to the last scene the hero copes with dangers and battleaxes difficulties, whereupon the curtain falls upon his happiness, which, being completely negative, cannot be the subject of art. The idyl, it is true, professes to treat of happiness, but in so doing it blunders sadly, for the poet either finds his verse turning beneath his hands into an insignificant epic made up of feeble sorrows, trivial pleasures, and trifling efforts, or else it becomes merely a description of the charm and beauty of Nature. The same thing, Schopenhauer says, is noticeable in music. Melody is a deviation from the keynote, to which, after many mutations, it at last returns; but the keynote, which expresses "the satisfaction of the will" is, when prolonged, perfectly

monotonous, and wearisome in the extreme.

From the logic of these arguments it is clear that Voltaire was not very far wrong when he said: "Happiness is but a dream, and only pain is real. I have thought so for eighty-four years, and I know of no better plan than to resign myself to the inevitable, and reflect that flies were born to be devoured by spiders, and man to be consumed by care."

To this conclusion the optimist will naturally object, but he does so in the face of history and experience, either of which is quite competent to prove that this world is far from being the best one possible. If neither of them succeeds in so doing, then let him wander through the hospitals, the cholera slums, the operating-rooms of the surgeon, the prisons, the torture-chambers, the slave-kennels, the battlefields, or any one of the numberless haunts of nameless misery; or, if all of these are too far, or too inconvenient, let him take a turn into one of the many factories where men and women, and even infants, work from ten to fourteen hours a day at mechanical labor, simply that they may continue to enjoy the exquisite delight of living.

Moreover, as Schopenhauer asks with grim irony, "Where did Dante find the materials for his 'Inferno' if not from this world; and yet is not his picture exhaustively satisfactory? To some minds it is even a trifle overcharged; but look at his Paradise; when he attempted to depict it he had nothing to guide him, this pleasant world could not offer a single suggestion; and so, being obliged to say something, and yet not knowing what to say, he palms off in place of a celestial panorama the instruction and advice which he imagines himself as receiving from

Beatrice and the Saints."

Briefly, then, life, to the pessimist, is a motiveless desire, a constant pain and continued struggle, followed by death, and so on, in *secula seculorum*, until the planet's crust crumbles to dust.

Since, therefore, life is so deplorable, the deduction seems to follow that it is better to take the poet's advice:—

"Count o'er the joys thine hours have
seen,
Count o'er thy days from anguish
free,
And know, whatever thou hast been,
'Tis something better—not to be."

But here the question naturally arises, how is this annihilation to be accomplished? Through a vulgar and commonplace suicide? Not at all. Schopenhauer is far too logical to suggest a palliative so fruitless and clap-trap as that. For suicide, far from being a denial of the will to live, is one of its strongest affirmations. Paradoxical as it may seem, the man who takes his own life really wants to live; what he does not want are the misery and trials attendant on his particular existence. He abolishes the individual, but not the race. The species continues, and pain with it.

In what manner, then, can we decently rid ourselves, and all who would otherwise follow, of the pangs and torments of life? Schopenhauer will give the receipt in a moment; but to understand the method clearly, it is necessary to take a glance at the metaphysics of love.

We are told by Dr. Frauenstadt that Schopenhauer considered this portion of his philosophy to be "a pearl." A pearl it may be, but as such it is not entirely suited to an Anglo-Saxon setting; nevertheless, as it is important to gain some idea of what this clear-eyed recluse thought of the delicate lever which disturbs the gravest interests, and whose meshes entwine peer and peasant alike, a brief description of it will not be entirely out of place.

By way of preface it may be said that, save Plato, no other philosopher has cared to consider a subject so simple yet complex as this, and of common accord it has been relinquished to the abuse of the poets and the praise of the rhymesters. It may be, perhaps, that from its nature it revolted at logic, and that the seekers for truth, in trying to clutch it, resembled the horseman in the familiar picture who, over ditches and dykes, pursues a phantom which floats always before him, and yet is ever intangible. La Rochefoucauld, who was ready enough with phrases, admitted that it was indefinable; a compatriot of his tried to compass it with the epigram, "C'est l'égoïsme à deux." Balzac gave it an escutcheon. Every one has had more or less to say about it; and as some have said more than they thought, while others thought more than they said, it has been beribboned with enough comparisons to form an unportable volume, while its history, from Tatterdemalia to Marlborough House, is written in blood as well as in books.

Love, however, is the basis of religion, the mainstay of ethics, as well as the inspiration of lyric and epic verse. It is, moreover, the principal subject of every dramatic, comic, and classic work in India, Europe, and America, and the inexhaustible spring from whose waters the fecund lands of fiction produce

fresh crops more regularly than the seasons. It is a subject never lacking in actuality, and yet one to which each century has given a different color. It is recognized as a disease, and recommended as a remedy. And yet what is it? There are poets who have said it was an illusion; but however it may appear to them, it is no illusion to the philosopher: far from it; its reality and importance increase in the ratio of its ardor, and whether it turns to the tragic or the comic, a love affair is to him, above all other early aims, the one which presents the gravest aspects, and the one most worthy of consideration; for all the passions and intrigues of to-day, reduced to their simplest expression and divested of all accompanying allurements, are nothing more nor less than the combination of the future generation.

"It is through this frivolity," Schopenhauer says, "that the *dramatis personæ* are to appear on the stage when we have made our exit. The existence of these future actors is absolutely conditioned on the general instinct of love, while their nature and characteristics depend on individual choice. Such is the whole problem. Love is the supreme will to live, the genius of the species, and nature, being highly strategic, covers itself, for the fulfillment of its aims, with a mask of objective admiration, and deludes the individual so cleverly therewith, that he takes that to be his own happiness which, in reality, is but the maintenance of the species."

The love affairs of to-day, therefore, instead of representing questions of personal joy or sorrow, are simply and solely a series of grave meditations on the existence and composition of the future generation. It is this grand preoccupation that causes the pathos and sublimity of love. It is this that makes

it so difficult to lend any interest to a drama with which the question is not intermingled. It is this that makes love an every-day matter, and yet an inexhaustible topic. It is this that explains the gravity of the *rôle* it plays, the importance which it gives to the most trivial incidents, and above all, it is this that creates its measureless ardor. To quote Madame Ackermann:—

"Ces délires sacrés, ces désirs sans
mesure,
Déchaînés dans vos flancs comme
d'ardents essaims,
Ces transports, c'est déjà l'humanité
future
Qui s'agite en vos seins."

However disinterested and ideal an affection may seem, however noble and elevated an attachment may be, it is, from Schopenhauer's standpoint, simply Will projecting itself into the creation of another being; and the moment in which this new being rises from chaos into the *punctum saliens* of its existence is precisely that moment in which two young people begin to fancy each other. It is in the innocent union and first embrace of the eyes that the microbe originates, though, of course, like other germs, it is fragile and prompt to disappear. In fact, there are few phenomena more striking than the profoundly serious, yet unconscious, manner in which two young people, meeting for the first time, observe one another. This common examination, this mutual study, is, as has been stated, the meditation of the genius of the species, and its result determines the degree of their reciprocal inclination.

In comedy and romance the sympathies of the

spectator are invariably excited at the spectacle of these two young people, and especially so when they are discovered defending their affection, or, to speak more exactly, the projects of the genius of the species, against the hostility of their parents, who are solely occupied with their individual interests. It is unquestionably for this reason that the interest in plays and novels centres on the entrance of this serene spirit, who, with his lawless aims and aspirations, threatens the peace of the other actors, and usually digs deep graves for their happiness. As a rule, he succeeds, and the climax, comformably with poetic justice, satisfies the spectator, who then goes away, leaving the lovers to their victory, and associating himself in the idea that at last they are happy, whereas, according to Schopenhauer, they have, in spite of the opposition of their parents, simply given themselves up as a sacrifice to the good of the species.

In tragedies in which love is the mainspring, the lovers usually die, because, as follows from the foregoing logic, they have been unable to triumph over those designs of which they were but the instruments.

As Schopenhauer adds, however, a lover may become comic as well as tragic, and this for the reason that in either case he is in the hands of a higher power, which dominates him to such an extent that he is, so to speak, carried out of himself, and his actions in consequence become disproportioned to his character. "Hence it is that the higher forms of love bring with them such poetic coloring, such transcendental and supernatural elevation, that they seem to veil their true end and aim from him completely. For the moment, he is

animated by the genius of the species. He has received a mission to found an indefinite series of descendants, and, moreover, to endow them with a certain constitution, and form them of certain elements which are only obtainable from him and a particular woman. The feeling which he then has of acting in an affair of great importance transports the lover to such superterrestial heights, and garbs his material nature with such an appearance of immateriality that, however prosaic he may generally be, his love at once assumes a poetic aspect, a result which is often incompatible with his dignity."

In brief, the instinct which guides an insect to a certain flower or fruit, and which causes it to disregard any inconvenience or danger in the attainment of its end, is precisely analogous to that sentiment which every poet has tried to express, without ever exhausting the topic. Indeed, the yearning of love which brings with it the idea that union with a certain woman will be an infinite happiness, and that the inability to obtain her will be productive of insufferable anguish, cannot, according to Schopenhauer, be considered to have its origin in the needs of the ephemeral individual; it is in fact but the sigh of the genius of the species, who sees herein a unique opportunity of realizing his aims, and who in consequence is violently agitated.

Inasmuch as love rests on an illusion of personal happiness, which the supervising spirit is at little pains to evoke, so soon as the tribute is paid the illusion vanishes, and the individual, left to his own resources, is mystified at finding that so many sublime and heroic efforts have resulted simply in a

vulgar satisfaction, and that, taking all things into consideration, he is no better off than he was before. As a rule, Theseus once consoled, Ariadne is forsaken, and had Petrarch's passion been requited his song would then have ceased, as that of the bird does when once its eggs are in the nest.

Every love-match, then, is contracted in the interest of the future generation, and not for the profit of the individual. The parties imagine, it is true, that it is for their own happiness; but, as Schopenhauer has carefully explained, owing to the instinctive illusion which is the essence of love they soon discover that they are not united to each other in any respect, and this fact becomes at once evident when the illusion which first joined them has at last disappeared. Hence it happens, Schopenhauer adds, that love-matches are usually unhappy, for they but assure the presence of the next generation at the expense of everything else, or, as the proverb runs, "Quien se casa por amores ha de viver con dolores."

"If now," he concludes, "we turn our attention to the tumult of life, we find that all men are occupied with its torments, we see them uniting their efforts in a struggle with want and massing their strength against misery, and yet there, in the thick of the fight, are two lovers whose eyes meet, charged with desire! But why do they seem so timid, why are their actions so mysterious? It is because they are traitors who would perpetuate the pain which, without them, would soon come to that end which they would prevent, as others have done before them."

There can be but one objection to this novel theory, which, at least, has the merit of being thoroughly logical, as well as that of connecting a subject so

intangible as love to the fundamental principle of the whole doctrine, and that is that it leaves those higher and purer realms of affection, of which most of us are conscious, almost entirely unvisited. This objection, however, loses much of its force when it is remembered that Schopenhauer gave to this division of his subject the title of "Metaphysics of Love," and in so doing sought solely to place the matter on a scientific basis. In this he has undoubtedly succeeded, and his explanation, if characteristic, is not for that reason necessarily unsound. In another essay,[9] which is narrowly connected with the one in hand, he takes the reader from the highest spheres of pure love to the foundation of ethics, and shows that both are derived from an identical sentiment, which he calls compassion.

And since grief is king, what better primate can he have than sympathy? To the thinker who sees joy submerged by pain, and death rule uncontested, what higher sentiment can come than that of pity? Schopenhauer has, however, been very frequently blamed for giving this as the foundation of morality; to many it has seemed too narrow and incomplete, and an academy (that of Copenhagen) refused to crown his essay, for that very reason. But whatever objections may be brought against it, its originality at least is unattackable. In ancient philosophy, ethics was a treatise of happiness; in modern works, it is generally a doctrine of eternal salvation; to Schopenhauer, it is neither; for if happiness is unobtainable, the subject is necessarily untreatable from such a standpoint, and on the other hand, if morality is practiced in the hope of future reward, or from fear of future punishment, it can hardly be said to spring from any great purity of intention. With such incentives it is but a doctrine of expediency,

and at best merely adapted to guide the more or less interested motives of human action; but as the detection of an interested motive behind an action admittedly suffices to destroy its moral value, it follows that the criterion of an act of moral value must be the absence of any egotistic or interested motive.

Schopenhauer points out that acts of this description are discernible in the unostentatious works of charity, from which no possible reward can accrue, and in which no personal interest is at work. "So soon," he says, "as sympathy is awakened the dividing line which separates one being from another is effaced. The welfare and misfortunes of another are to the sympathizer as his own, his distress speaks to him and the suffering is shared in common." Meanwhile this phenomenon, which he sees to be of almost daily occurrence, is yet one which reason cannot explain. All, even the most hard-hearted, have experienced it, and they have done so very often intuitively and to their own great surprise. Men, for instance, risk their lives spontaneously, without possible hope of gain or applause, for a total stranger. England, some years ago, paid twenty millions sterling to free the slaves in her colonies, and the motive of that grandiose action can certainly not be attributed to religion, for the New Testament does not contain a word against slavery, though in the days to which it refers slavery was universal.

It is pity, then, according to Schopenhauer, which is the base of every action that has a true moral value. "Indeed," he says, "the soundest, the surest guarantee of morality is the compassionate sympathy that unites us with everything that lives. Before it the casuist is dumb. Whoso possesses it is incapable of

causing the slightest harm or injury to any one; rather to all will he be magnanimous, he will forgive, he will assist, and each of his actions will be distinguished by its justice and its charity." In brief, compassion "is the spontaneous product of nature, which, while independent of religion and culture, is yet so pervasive that everywhere it is confidently evoked, and nowhere counted among the unknown gods. It is compassion that makes the mother love best her feeblest child. Truly the man who possesses no compassion is outside of humanity."

The idea that runs through the whole subject, and which is here noted because its development leads to the logical climax of the entire philosophy, is that all love is sympathy, or, rather, all pure love is sympathy, and all love which is not sympathy is selfishness. Of course combinations of the two are frequently met; genuine friendship, for instance, is a mixture of both, the selfishness consisting in the pleasure experienced in the presence of the friend, and the sympathy in the participation in his joys and sorrows. With this theory as a starting-point, Schopenhauer reduces every human action to one, or sometimes to two, or at most three motives: the first is selfishness, which seeks its own welfare; the second is the perversity or viciousness which attacks the welfare of others; and the third is compassion, which seeks their good. The egotist has but one sincere desire, and that is the greatest possible amount of personal well-being. To preserve his existence, to free it from pain and privation, and even to possess every delight that he is capable of imagining, such is his end and aim. Every obstacle between his selfishness and his desires is an enemy to be suppressed. So far as possible he would like to possess everything, enjoy everything, dominate

everything. His motto is, "All for me, nothing for you." When, therefore, the power of the state is eluded, or becomes momentarily paralyzed, all at once the riot of selfishness and perversity begins. One has but to read the "Causes Célèbres," or the history of anarchies, to see what selfishness and perversity are capable of accomplishing when once their leash is loosed.

At the bottom of the social ladder is he whose desire for life is so violent that he cares nothing for the rights of others, and for a small personal advantage oppresses, robs, or kills. Above him is the man who never violates the rights of others,—unless he has a tempting opportunity, and can do so with every reasonable assurance of safety,—the respectable citizen who pays his taxes and pew-rent, and once in a while serves on the jury. On a higher level is he who, possessing a considerable income, uses but little of it for himself and gives the rest to the poor, the man who makes less distinction than is usually made between himself and others. Such an one is as little likely to let others starve while he himself has enough and to spare, as another would be to hunger one day that he might eat more the next. To a man of this description the veil of Mâyâ, which may be taken to mean the veil of illusions, has become transparent. He recognizes himself in every being, and consequently in the sufferer.

Let this veil of Mâyâ be lifted from the eyes of a man to such an extent that he makes no distinction at all between himself and others, and is not only highly benevolent, but ready at all times to sacrifice himself for the common good; then he has in him the holiness of the saint and the germ that may flower into renunciation. The phenomenon, Schopenhauer

says, by which this change is marked is the transition from virtue to asceticism. In other words, it then no longer suffices for him to love others as himself; there arises within him a horror of the kernel and essence of the world, which recognizably is full of misery, and of which his own existence is an expression, and thereupon denying the nature that is in him, and ceasing to will anything, he gives himself up to complete indifferentism to all things.

Such, in outline, is Schopenhauer's theory of ethics, which, starting from the principle of kindness of heart, leads to the renunciation of all things, and, curious as the *dénouement* may appear, at last to universal deliverance.

In earlier pages the world has been explained to be utterly unsatisfactory, and it has been hinted that the suicide, were he delivered of his suffering, would gladly rehabilitate himself with life; for it is the form of life that the suicide repudiates, not life itself. But life, to be scientifically annihilated, should be abolished, not only in its suffering, but in its empty pleasures and happiness as well; its entire inanity should be recognized, and the whole root cut once and for all. In explaining in what manner this is to be accomplished, Schopenhauer carries his reader *bon gré*, *mal gré*, far off into the shadows of the Orient. On the one side is the lethargy of India, on the other China drugged with opium, while above all rises the fantasy of the East, the dogma of metempsychosis.

As has been seen, Schopenhauer holds that there is in every life an indestructible principle. This belief he shares with the Buddhist, the Brahmin, the ancient Druid, and the early Scandinavian; historically speaking, the doctrine is so old that a wise Anglican

is reported to have judged it fatherless, motherless, and without genealogy. Properly speaking, however, this creed does not now insist that there is a transmigration of the soul, but rather, in accordance with recent esoteric teaching, it implies simply that the fruit of good and evil actions revives with the individual through a succession of lives, until the evil is outbalanced, the good is paramount, and deliverance is at last attained. In other words, the beautiful myth of the early faith is superseded by an absurd and awkward palingenesia.

Schopenhauer gives the name of Will to that force which, in Indian philosophy, is considered to resurrect with man across successive lives, and with which the horror of ulterior existences reappears. It is from this nightmare that we are summoned to awake, but in the summons we are told that the awakening can only come with a recognition of the true nature of the dream. The work to be accomplished, therefore, is less physical than moral. We are not to strangle ourselves in sleep, but to rise out of it in meditation.

"In man," says Schopenhauer, "the Will-to-live advances to consciousness, and consequently to that point where it can readily choose between its continuance or abolition. Man is the saviour, and all nature awaits its redemption through him. He is at once the priest and the victim."

If, therefore, in the succeeding generations the appetite for death has been so highly cultivated, and compassion is so generally practiced, that a widespread and united pity is felt for all things, then through asceticism, which the reader may construe universal and absolute chastity, that state of

indifference will be produced in which subject and object disappear, and—the sigh of the egoist Will once choked thereby into a death-rattle—the world will be delivered from pain.

"It is this," Schopenhauer exclaims in his concluding paragraph, "that the Hindus have expressed in the empty terms of Nirvâna, and reabsorption in Brahma. We readily recognize that what remains after the entire abolition of the Will is without effect on those in whom it still works; but to those in whom it has been crushed, what is this world of ours with its suns and stellar systems? Nothing."

In the preface to the second edition of the "Welt als Wille und Vorstellung," Schopenhauer recommends that the work be read by the light of his supplementary essays. This task, beyond demanding an agility of pencil and some concentration, is otherwise one of the most morbidly agreeable that can be suggested. The sensation that comes with a first reading is that of an abrupt translation to the wonders of a world which heretofore may have been dimly perceived, but which then for the first time is visited and thoroughly explored. The perspective, it is true, holds no Edens; in the distance there are no Utopias; but when the journey is ended and the book laid aside, the peaks and abysses to which the reader has been conducted stand steadfast in memory, and the whole panorama of deception and pain groups itself in a retrospect as sudden and clear as that which attends the last moments of the drowning man.

And Schopenhauer is the least pedantic, and yet the most luminous of ciceroni: in pages which Hugo would not disavow, and of which the foregoing

analysis can give at best but a bald and unsatisfactory idea, he explains each height and ruin with an untiring verve, and with an irony as keen and fundamental as Swift's. But beyond his charm as a stylist, and his exhaustive knowledge of life, he claims attention through his theory of the universal force, his originality in the treatment of ethics, and the profound ingenuity with which he attaches everything, from a globule to an adagio in B flat, to his general system.

It is said that philosophy begins precisely where science ends; the doctrine, therefore, which has just been considered is, in a measure, impregnable to criticism. Reduced to its simplest expression, it amounts briefly to this: an unknown principle—an *x*, which no term can translate, but of which Will, taken in the widest sense of Force, is the rendition the least inexact—explains the universe. The highest manifestation of Will is man; any obstacle it encounters is pain. Pain is the attendant of life. Man, however, duped by the instinct of love, has nothing better to do than to prolong through his children the sorrowful continuation of unhappy generations. The hope of a future existence in a better world seems to be a consolation, but as a hope it rests on faith. Since life is not a benefit, chaos is preferable. Beyond suicide, which is not a philosophic solution, there are but two remedies for the misery of life; one, a palliative, is found in art and disinterested contemplation; the other, a specific, in asceticism or absolute chastity. Were chastity universal, it would drain the source of humanity, and pain would disappear; for if man is the highest manifestation of Will, it is permissible to assume that, were he to die out, the weaker reflections would pass away as the twilight vanishes with the full light.

All great religions have praised asceticism, and in consequence it was not difficult for Schopenhauer to cite, in support of his theory, a number of texts from the gnostics, the early fathers of the church, the thinkers, such as Angelius, Silesius, and Meister Eckhard, the mystics, and the quietists, together with pertinent extracts from the Bible and the sacred books of the Orient. But none of these authorities seem to have grasped the principle which, according to Schopenhauer, lies at the root of asceticism and constitutes its chief value. At best, they have seen in it but the merit of obedience to a fantastic law, the endurance of a gratuitous privation, or else they have blessed in celibacy the exaltation of personal purity and the renunciation of worldly pleasures. From the philosophic standpoint, however, the value of asceticism consists in the fact that it leads to deliverance, prepares the world for the annihilation of pain, and indicates the path to be pursued. Through his labors and sympathy the apostle of charity succeeds in saving from death a few families which, in consequence of his kindness, are condemned to a long misery. The ascetic, on the other hand, does far better; he preserves whole generations from life, and in two or three instances very nearly succeeded in saving the world. "The women," Schopenhauer says somewhere, "refused to join in the enterprise, and that is why I hate them."

If asceticism were practiced by all men, it follows that pain, so far as man is concerned, would cease in it. But is it permissible to assume that with the disappearance of man the world will vanish with him —in other words, if humanity dies out, that animality must necessarily follow after?

It is here, if anywhere, that Schopenhauer has

blundered; the world is deplorably bad, let the optimist and thoughtless say what they will, and it would undoubtedly be very advantageous to have the whole universe tumble into sudden chaos; but that such a consummation is to be brought about by voluntary asceticism is, in the present state of society, and independent of the opposition of women, greatly to be doubted.

Schopenhauer has denied that a being superior to man could exist; if, then, the nineteenth century, which plumes itself on the mental elevation and culture of the age, and in looking back at the ignorance of earlier epochs considers itself the top of all creation,—if, then, the nineteenth century, in its perspicacity, refuses such a solution, there is little left for humanity to do save to bear the pains of life as it may, or, better still, with the resignation which Leopardi long ago suggested.

When, putting aside this eccentric theory of deliverance, the teaching of Schopenhauer is reviewed, it will, according to the nature of the reader, bring with it a warm approval or a horrified dissent. To some he will appear like an incarnation of the Spirit of Truth; to others like the skeleton in Goya's painting, which, leaning with a leer from the tomb, scrawls on it the one word, Nada,—nothing.

FOOTNOTES:

[8] This distinction of Kant's is not strictly original. Its germ is in Plato, and Voltaire set all Europe laughing at Maupertuis, who had vaguely stated that "nous vivons dans un monde ou rien de ce que nous apercevons ne ressemble à ce que nous apercevons." Whether

Kant was acquainted or not with Maupertuis' theory is, of course, difficult to say; at any rate, he resurrected the doctrine, and presented idealism for the first time in a logical form.

[9] "Das Fundament der Moral," contained in *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik*. Leipsic: Brockhaus.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BORDERLANDS OF HAPPINESS.

It was with something of the lassitude which succeeds an orgy that Schopenhauer turned from the riot of the will and undertook to examine such possibilities of happiness as life may yet afford, and, as incidental thereto, the manner in which such possibilities may be most enjoyed.

To this subject he brought a sumptuous variety of reflections, which are summed up in a multi-colored essay, entitled "Lebensweisheit," or Conduct of Life, but in which, in spite of the luxury of detail and brilliancy of description, Schopenhauer almost unconsciously reminds the reader of a man who takes his constitutional at midnight, and preferentially when it rains.

The suggestions that occur to him are almost flamboyant in their intensity, and yet about them all there circles such a series of dull limitations that one somehow feels a sense of dumbness and suffocation, a longing to get away and rush out into an atmosphere less charged with sombre conclusions.

Concerning the baseness and shabbiness of every-day life Schopenhauer has but little to say. He touches but lightly on its infinite vulgarity, while its occasional splendor is equally unnoticed. Indeed, he preaches not to redeem nor convert, but simply that his hearers may be in some measure enlightened as to the bald unsatisfactoriness of all things, and so direct their individual steps as to come as little in contact with avoidable misery as possible. To many it will, of course, seem quite appalling that a mind so richly receptive as his should have chosen such shaggy moorlands for habitual contemplation, when, had he wished, he might have feasted his eyes on resplendent panoramas. The moorlands, however, were not of his making; he was merely a painter filling in the landscape with objects which stood within the perspective, and if he happened upon no resplendent panoramas, the fault lay simply in the fact that he had been baffled in his attempt to find them.

Voltaire says, somewhere, "I do not know what the life eternal may be, but at all events this one is a very poor joke." In this sentiment Schopenhauer solemnly concurred. That which was a *boutade* to the one became a theory to the other, and it is to his treatment of this subject that the attention of the reader is now invited. The introduction which he gives to it, if not as light as the overture to a ballet, will, it is believed, still be found both interesting and

instructive, while its conclusion and supplement form, it may be noted, an admitted part of that which is best of the modern essayists.

The first chapter opens with an enumeration of those possessions which differentiate the lot of man, and which in so doing form the basis of possible happiness. It has been said that the happiest land is the one which has little, if any, need of importations, and he notes that the man is most contented whose interior wealth suffices for his own amusement, and who demands but little, if anything, from the exterior world. Or, as Oliver Goldsmith has expressed it,—

> "Still to ourselves in ev'ry place
> consigned
> Our own felicity we make or find."

"In a world such as ours," Schopenhauer thinks, "he who has much to draw upon from within is not unlike a room in which stands a Christmas tree, bright, warm, and joyous, while all about are the snows and icicles of a December night."

That which a man is in himself, that which accompanies him into solitude, and which none can give him or take from him, is necessarily more essential than all that he may possess or all that he may appear in the eyes of others. The scholar, for instance, even when utterly alone feeds most agreeably on his own thoughts, and we are most of us very well aware that he whose intelligence is limited may ceaselessly vary his festivals and amusements without ever succeeding in freeing himself from the baleful weariness of boredom.

According to Schopenhauer, then, the supreme and all-important elements of earthly happiness are subjective possessions, such as a noble character, a capable mind, an easy disposition, and a well-organized and healthy body; and it is these gifts, he rightly insists, that should be cultivated and preserved, even at the expense of wealth and emolument. An easy disposition, however, is that which above all other things contributes most directly to contentment. Gayety of heart is, indeed, its own recompense, and he who is really gay has a reason for so being from the very fact that he is so. Supposing a man to be young, handsome, rich, and respected, the one question to be asked about him is, Is he light-hearted? On the other hand, if he is light-hearted, little does it matter whether he is young or old, straight-limbed or deformed, poor or rich; in any case he is contented. It is light-heartedness alone which is, so to speak, the hard cash of happiness; all the rest is but the note-of-hand; and in making this observation, he (Schopenhauer) is careful to point out that there is nothing that contributes so little to gayety as wealth, and nothing that contributes so much thereto as health. "It is in the lower classes, among the laborers, and particularly among the tillers of the soil, that gayety and contentment are to be found, while on the other hand, the faces of the great and the rich generally present an expression of sullen constraint. To thoroughly understand, however, how greatly happiness depends on gayety of disposition and the state of health, it is only necessary to compare the impression which the same circumstances and similar wants bring to us in days of health and vigor, with that which is paramount when through our condition we are predisposed to dullness and discontent. In brief, it is not the event

itself, but the way in which we view it, that makes or unmakes our happiness." Or, as Epictetus said long ago, man is not moved by things, but by his opinion of them.

As a general rule, nine tenths of happiness may be said to rest on the state of health; when this is perfect, anything and everything may be a source of pleasure; in illness, on the other hand, nothing, no matter what its nature may be, is capable of affording any real enjoyment. It follows, therefore, that it is wanton stupidity to sacrifice health for any purpose, even for wealth and fame, and especially to passing and fugitive pleasures, however alluring they may appear.

The next class of possessions of which Schopenhauer treats is property; and in considering this division he seems not unlike that contented individual who, on seeing a quantity of objects exposed for sale, exclaimed pensively, "How much there is of which I have no need!"

Every man, it will be admitted, has his own horizon, beyond which his pretensions do not extend. They reach the edge, but they do not cross it. In other words, the absence of those possessions with which a man is unacquainted is in no sense a privation to him; and it is probably for this reason that the day-laborer bothers himself so little about the flaring wealth of the rich. Wealth, on the other hand, is like salt water; the more one drinks, the greater the thirst. But, even so, this grim philosopher was far from despising it. "It is a rampart against an incalculable number of discomforts; and it is in this manner that it should be viewed, instead of being considered, as is generally the case, in the light of a

permission to procure a diversity of pleasure."

As a practical man, Schopenhauer saw nothing that could make his ink blush in repeatedly recommending the preservation of a fortune, made or inherited; "for even," he says, "if it simply suffices to permit its possessor to live without the necessity of labor, it is still an inappreciable advantage in that it brings with it an exemption from the general drudgery which is the ordinary lot of man. It is only on this condition that man is born free, master of his hour and his strength, and enabled to say each morning, 'The day is mine.' The difference, therefore, between him who has a thousand crowns a year and the landlord whose rent-roll runs into millions is infinitely less than the difference between the first and the man who has nothing."

If the man whose necessities are provided for is inclined to follow Schopenhauer's advice, he will, first of all, seek in repose and leisure the avoidance of every form of discomfort; especially will he seek to lead a tranquil and unpretentious existence which, so far as possible, will be sheltered from all intruders. After having for a certain time kept up relations with what is termed the world, he will prefer a retired life; and if he is of superior intelligence, he will give himself up to solitude. This he will do, because the more a man possesses in himself, the less he has need of the exterior world. Superiority of intelligence will therefore lead him to insociability; for, as Schopenhauer says, "It is precisely in solitude, where each of us is dependent on his own resources, that every one is brought face to face with his own individuality; there the imbecile in his purple groans beneath the weight of his miserable self, while he who is mentally gifted

peoples and animates with his thoughts the most arid and desert region."

Now, it may be objected that contentment is not to be found in an idle folding of the hands behind a hedge set against vexation. Nor is this Schopenhauer's meaning. Wealth is but the means, not the source of contentment. It is not the certainty of an income that brings happiness, for its accompanying affranchisement from want carries the tenant to the opposite pole of misery, where gapes the hydra, ennui. And it is there that he whose necessities are provided for surely lands, unless he fills the hour with some one of the many elevated pursuits from which those who are obliged to work for their bread are in a great measure debarred.

The third and last class of possessions that Schopenhauer discusses is that which a man represents; or, in other words, the manner in which he appears to his neighbors. "There is," he says, "no superstition more universally dominant than that which leads us to attach a high value to the opinion of others; and whether it be that this superstition has its roots in our very nature, or that it has followed us up from the birth of society and civilization, it is none the less certain that it influences our conduct in a manner which is incommensurate, and hostile to our well-being. This influence may be traced from the point in which it shows itself beneath the anxious and servile deference to the *qu'en dira-t-on*, to that in which it drives the dagger of Virginius into his daughter's heart, or else to where it leads men to sacrifice their peace, their fortune, their wealth, and their lives, for the sake of posthumous renown."

The existence, however, which we lead in the minds

of others is a possession, Schopenhauer has carefully explained, which, through a singular weakness, while highly prized is yet entirely unimportant to our happiness. Indeed, if the comparison be drawn between that which we are in reality and that which we are in the eyes of others, it will be seen that the first term of the comparison comprises our entire existence, for its sphere of action is in our own perceptions, while, on the other hand, that which we represent acts on other minds than our own, and in consequence has no direct existence for us, and an indirect one only so far as it may influence their conduct toward us. The wealthy, in their uttermost magnificence, can but say, "Our happiness is entirely outside of us; it dwells in the minds of others." Certainly, to a happiness of this description every thinker is indifferent, or will necessarily become so as he grows aware of the superficiality and dullness of mind, the narrow sentiments and limited ideas, the absurdity of opinion and numberless errors, which go to the making of his neighbor's brain. Indeed, it is generally sufficient to note with what contempt half-a-dozen imbeciles will speak of some distinguished man, to be quite ready to agree with Schopenhauer that in according a high value to the opinion of others we are paying them an honor which they in no sense deserve.

It is essential to our well-being to thoroughly understand the simple fact that each one lives but in his own particular skin and not in the opinion of others, and that, therefore, our actual condition as determined by health, temperament, intellect, wife, children, and home, is a hundred times more important than what it may please others to think about us; fame, of course, is very pleasant; so is glory; but, after all, what do they amount to? As has

been seen, Leopardi snapped his fingers at them both. To him they were simply illusions. Schopenhauer goes more deeply into the subject, and explains with great opulence of detail and fantasy of adjective that glory and fame are founded on that which a man is in comparison to others; in other words, that their value is purely relative, and would disappear entirely if every one became that which a celebrity is already. It is not fame that is so desirable, but rather the merit which should precede it. "The predisposing conditions are, so to speak, the substance, while glory itself is but the accident, which works on its possessor as an exterior symptom, and confirms his own high opinion of himself. But this symptom is yet not infallible, for is there not glory without merit and merit without fame?"

As glory is incontestably but the echo, the image, the shadow, the simulachre of merit, and as in any case that which is admirable should be more highly valued than the admiration that it excites, it follows that that which causes happiness does not consist in glory, but rather in the attracting force of merit; or, to put it more exactly, in the possession of such character and faculties as predispose thereto.

To be deserving of fame is, then, its own exceeding great reward. There all the honor lies, and necessarily this must be true, "for, as a rule, the reverberation of a glory that is to echo through future ages rarely reaches the ears of him who is the object; and though certain instances to the contrary may be objected, yet they have usually been due to fortuitous circumstances which are otherwise without great importance. Men lack ordinarily the proper balance of judgment which is necessary for the appreciation of superior productions; and in

these matters they usually take the opinion of others, and that, too, in such wise that ninety-nine admirers out of a hundred accord their praise at the nod of one." It is for this reason that the approbation of one's contemporaries, however numerous their voices may be, has so slight a value for the thinker, for at best he can hearken to the voices of the few, which in themselves may be but the effect of the moment. "Would a virtuoso be greatly flattered by the applause of his public if he learned that, with but two or three exceptions, the auditorium was filled with deaf mutes who, to conceal their infirmity, clapped a loud approval so soon as they saw a real listener move his hands? And how would it be if he knew the leaders of the clique were often paid to procure a great success to the most insignificant scraper of cat-gut?"

It is with reflections of this description that Schopenhauer explains why it is that sudden celebrity so rarely passes into immortal glory, and points—

> ... "how hard it is to climb
> The heights where Fame's proud temple
> shines afar,"

and even, the summit gained, the uselessness of it all.

This same conclusion has been reached by several other writers, notably by Leopardi, whose views have been already explained, and by Von Hartmann, whose theories are mentioned in the next chapter; but the main idea has perhaps been best expressed by D'Alembert, who, in speaking of the temple of fame, says, "Its interior is inhabited only by the dead who were not there in their life-time, and by certain

aspirants who are shown the door as soon as they die."

To sum up what Schopenhauer has set forth, and of which the foregoing detached ideas can give at best but a lame conception, we find that to his mind, as perhaps to that of every serious thinker, the first and most essential condition of contentment is the quality of character; and this would be essential if only because it is always in action, but it is so, even to a greater extent, because it is the only possession which cannot in some manner be taken from us. In this sense he considers its value as absolute when opposed to the relative value of mere possessions and the opinion of others. In brief, man is not so susceptible to the influence of the exterior world as it is generally supposed, for only Time can exercise his sovereign rights upon him. Beneath this force the physical and intellectual qualities wane and gradually succumb, the moral character alone remaining invulnerable.

Considered in this connection, actual possessions and the opinions which others hold concerning us have this advantage over character: they need not necessarily be affected by time; moreover, being accessible in their nature they both may be acquired, while, on the other hand, character once established remains invariable for life. Schopenhauer evidently does not hold with him who sings—

> "That men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves, to higher things."

All that can be done, he has explained, is to employ the individuality, such as it is, to the greatest profit; or, in other words, a man should pursue only those

aspirations which correspond to his disposition, and only choose in consequence that occupation and walk of life which is best suited to it.

From the preponderance thus given to the first of these three divisions over the two others, it follows that it is far better to watch over health and the development of the intellect than it is to attend to the acquisition of wealth. Schopenhauer, of course, does not mean that the acquisition of that which is necessary to one's proper maintenance should be in any wise neglected; far from it. His idea is simply that a superfluity of riches, instead of contributing to well-being, brings with it an inevitable vexation in the constant care which the management of a large fortune demands.

Briefly, then, the essential element of contentment is that which one is in himself, and it is simply because the dose is ordinarily so small that the majority of those who have been conquerors in the struggle with want feel themselves to be as thoroughly unhappy as those who are still in the thick of the fight. But still, whatever the issue of the conflict may be, each one among us is enjoined to aspire to a good repute. Honor is an inappreciable belonging, and glory, the most exquisite of all that is within the reach of man, is the Golden Fleece of the elect.

The second and third divisions have upon each other a reciprocal effect: wealth brings with it the good opinion of others, and the good opinion of others has aided many a man on the road to fortune; taken together they represent over again the *habes, haberis* of Petronius, yet the factors that reside within us contribute more liberally to contentment than those which are born of things.

It is somewhat in this manner, but with a conciseness of deduction and a felicity of diction which the foregoing summary is inadequate even to suggest, that Schopenhauer, without any noticeable effort, points quietly and with a certain suavity of self-confidence to the fact that there is, in spite of all our bluster and hurrying about, very little in life that is of much consequence. There is, of course, little that is terrifying in what he has written; there is no incentive and no stimulus, as the phrase goes, to be up and doing; indeed, to the reflective mind his logic will have somewhat the effect of a sedative, and to many he will seem to hold that the best use life can be put to is to pass it in a sort of dilettante quietism. Such in the main is his idea, but it is an idea which, to be acted upon, necessitates a refinement of the senses and a burnish of the intellect such as is possessed but by the few, and consequently the fear of its general adoption need cause but small alarm. It may be remembered that, beyond the surface of things here examined, he pointed, in another essay, to the influence of morality on general happiness, and recommended the practice of charity, forbearance, and good will to all men, as one of the first conditions of mental content.

Against all this, naturally, many objections might be raised, and several ameliorations could be suggested, but in the main the teaching has a certain sound value which it would be difficult to talk away. Champfort has said, "Happiness is no easy matter; it is hard to find it within us, and impossible to find it elsewhere," and this aphorism, with which Schopenhauer decked his title-page, served pretty much as keynote to the whole essay. All the way through he has insisted that the prime essential is what one *is* in one's self, that is, in character and

disposition, but not wealth nor yet the esteem of others; these, it is true, are pleasing additions, but not the *sine qua non*.

Wealth, however, is too greatly prized to suffer from a theoretic treatment any appreciable diminution in general esteem, and there are necessarily few who will object to it because they are told it is an extra burden. Perhaps Schopenhauer would not have turned his back upon it either had he been put to the test, but as he escaped that, the conjecture is comparatively useless; still, few men can eat two dinners, and those who have that capacity are seldom objects of envy, even to the disciples of Baron Brisse. The dinners may stand, of course, for figurative repasts, and, according to Schopenhauer, if a man has enough, a superfluity is not only unnecessary, but may readily resolve itself into a cause of vexation.

Certainly, as Schiller said, we are all born in Arcadia: that is, we enter life fully persuaded that happiness exists, and that it is most easy to make acquaintance with it; but, generally speaking, experience soon lets us know that happiness is a will o' the wisp, which is only visible from afar, while on the other hand, suffering and pain have a reality so insistent that they present themselves not only at once and unexpectedly, but without any of the flimsiness of illusion. In Schopenhauer's view, the best the world has to offer is an existence of painless tranquillity; pleasures are and always will be negative, and to consider them otherwise is a mistake which brings its own punishment with it. Pain, on the contrary, is positive, and it is in its absence that the ladder to possible contentment may be found. If, then, from a condition of this description, viz.: one which is

devoid of pain, boredom be also subtracted, then the reader may be sure that this is the pinnacle of earthly happiness, and that anything that lies beyond belongs to the domain of pure chimera.

In the chapter succeeding the one just considered Schopenhauer added certain reflections on the proper conduct of life which, though loose and unsystematic, are yet peculiarly fertile in suggestion, and entirely free from the more or less accentuated platitudes with which other writers have dulled the subject.

In this essay he holds that the supreme rule of earthly wisdom is contained in Aristotle's dictum that the sage will seek to dwell where pain is not, and not where pleasure is. The truth of this axiom he establishes by a constant reiteration of his favorite theory that pleasure as well as happiness is negative, and only pain is real. Now other writers, particularly Mr. James Sully and Herr von Hartmann, have rebelled against this statement, but the force of their arguments has not been strong enough to confute it. Indeed, mere logic can make no man contented, and in any event, if a philosopher considers pleasure as a negative condition, and the critic prefers to look upon it in a different light, the student is no more bound to agree with the one than with the other; he will, if properly advised, draw his conclusions from his own sensations. In accordance with the best views, however, Schopenhauer is right and his critics wrong. A homely example which he suggests may perhaps serve to set the matter straight: when we are in perfect health, and there is but one little painful spot somewhere—for instance, an aching tooth or a swollen finger—our otherwise perfect health is

unnoticed, and our attention is directed entirely to the pain we are experiencing, while pleasure, determined, as always, by the totality of the sensations, is entirely effaced. In the same manner, when everything in which we are interested is going as we wish, save one thing which is going the wrong way, it is this particular thing that is constantly in our mind, and not the other and more important matters, which are giving us no concern.

Schopenhauer's advice, therefore, is that attention should not be directed to the pleasures of life, but to the means by which its innumerable evils may best be escaped. If this recommendation is not sound, then Voltaire's aphorism—happiness is but a dream and only pain is real—is as false in appearance as it is correct in reality. Whoever, then, would draw up a balance sheet of pleasure and pain should not base the sum total on the amount of pleasures which he has enjoyed, but rather in accordance with the pains which he has avoided. For as it has been pointed out, life at best is not given to us to be enjoyed, but to be endured, and the happiest man is, therefore, he who has wandered through life with the smallest burden of physical and mental suffering, and not he to whom the most vivid delights and intensest joys have been accorded.

In any case, the greatest piece of stupidity of which man can be guilty is to wish to transform his theatre of misery into a pleasure-ground, and to attempt to seek happiness therein, instead of trying, as he should, to avert as many pains as possible. There are, of course, many who are foolish enough not to take this view of life; but, according to Schopenhauer, those who do not do so are much more at fault than those who, with excess of precaution, look upon the

world as a burning pit, and occupy themselves to the best of their ability in procuring a fire-proof dwelling.

The simpleton will always run after pleasure, and the pessimist will do all he can to give pain a wide berth; if, in spite of his efforts, the success of the latter is small, the fault is not so much his as that of fate; and if, in pursuance of this idea, he has taken a very roundabout way and uselessly sacrificed any amount of possible pleasures without any appreciable benefit, he can at least take heart again in the knowledge that he has in reality lost nothing at all, for the possible pleasures are such pure chimeras that it is simply childish to grieve about them.

It is, Schopenhauer says, because this mistake is so frequently made in favor of optimism that such a number of misfortunes occur, for in those moments that we are free from discomfort "disquieting desires dazzle our eyes with the illusions of an unreal yet seductive happiness, and lure us on to a suffering which is neither the one nor the other; then indeed do we grieve over the lost estate, which was exempt from pain, as over a paradise on which we have wittingly turned the key. In this way it seems as though some evil spirit was constantly working a deceptive mirage to draw us from that freedom from pain, which is the supreme and only real happiness."

Now, the average young man is usually possessed of some vague conviction that the world, stretching out before him to unseen limits, is the seat of a tangible happiness, which only escapes those who are not clever enough to grasp it. This conviction, moreover, is strengthened by romance and verse, and by that hypocrisy which leads the world always by the

thread of exterior appearance. Ever after, his life is a more or less prudently conducted hunt, a chase for a fictitious game, until at last with a round turn he is pulled up face to face with disenchantment, and finds that the infinite vistas narrow down to a dark alley, with a dead wall at the end.

On the other hand, the careful observer of men and things will mark a protest on his own existence; he will have no great hopes, and but few regrets; Plato long ago said there is nothing in life worth a struggle, and to this maxim Schopenhauer's ideal reader will attune his days and, in any variations he may attempt, keep always to the minor key.

The chief difficulty, however, which the candidate in pessimism will encounter in his first attempt to practice the foregoing recommendations is that which is raised by the hypocrisy of the world, to which allusion has been already made; and yet, in Schopenhauer's teaching, the most practical lesson that can be given to youth is the showing up of the whole thing for the sham that it is. "The splendors are merest tinsel," he says; "the essence of the thing is lacking; the fêtes, the balls, the illuminations, the music, are but the banners, the indications, the hieroglyphics of joy; yet, as a rule, joy is absent, it alone has sent a regret. When it does present itself, it comes ordinarily without invitation and unannounced; it enters, *sans façon*, in the simplest manner, often for the most trivial reason, and under circumstances that are well-nigh insignificant. Like the gold in Australia, it is spread about here and there according to the whim of hazard, without law or rule, generally in small particles, and but seldom in an appreciable quantity."

This certainly cannot be termed an enthusiastic view of life, nor, for that matter, is it intended to be so considered. There was too much unreasoning enthusiasm, Schopenhauer thought, and too much unwary skating over thin surfaces, and it was precisely for this reason that he set about painting Danger in the biggest and blackest-looking characters. If his advice, therefore, is not always cheerful, it is at least practical, and in any event no one can go far astray in following the monitory finger-posts which he was the first to erect; the wayfarer who takes them for guidance may perhaps stand still, but at least he will not stumble into any artificial pitfalls, or happen upon unexpected quagmires.

In treating of our conduct to ourselves, Schopenhauer lays much stress on the recommendation that such proportion be preserved between the attention which we give to the present and that which we grant to the future, that the one will in nowise interfere with the other. As there are many who live for the hour and many who live for the future, the right measure is seldom attained; but, as Schopenhauer points out, the future, like the past, has a value which is more apparent than real. It is the present that is actual, it is the present that is certain, while the future, on the contrary, usually turns out in a manner totally different from our expectation. The distance which "robes the mountains" expands them in our thoughts, but the present alone is true and effective; and as it is therein that our existence exclusively rests, it should not only be hospitably received, but every hour that is free from vexation or pain should be enjoyed to the fullest extent, and not saddened with the memory of irrecoverable hopes, or darkened by

apprehensions of the morrow. In other words, let the dead past bury its dead, and for the moment take Seneca for model, and agree with him that each day separately is a separate life. As for the future, it rests in the lap of the gods.

"The only misfortunes concerning which we should alarm ourselves are those that are inevitable; but then, after all, how many are there of this nature? Misfortunes, broadly considered, are either possible and probable, or else certain, though in the indefinite future; and if we bother ourselves over all that *might* come to pass, we would never enjoy a moment's repose." In order, therefore, that tranquillity may not be unnecessarily disturbed, Schopenhauer advises that possible misfortunes be looked upon as though they would never occur, and inevitable misfortunes as though they were still far distant.

It is a curious fact that the blind, who of all people are usually pitied as the most unfortunate, possess, as a class, the calmest and most contented expression. This phenomenon may serve as some corroboration of a theory, which Schopenhauer expands at great length, that the narrower the circle of vision the greater the happiness; and conversely, the wider it is the greater the inquietude and torment. It is, then, in the simplicity and uniformity of life—so long, of course, as it does not engender weariness of mind—that the greatest measure of happiness is to be found. Under conditions of this description, which every poet from Horace to Joaquin Miller has more or less praised, the burden from which life is inseparable is borne most lightly, and existence flows like a rivulet, without tides or waves.

The claims of society, the effort to keep in the swim,

dans le mouvement, as the French say, is not, of course, very conducive to the tranquil contentment which is here so earnestly commended. Schopenhauer has much to say on the subject. As a self-constituted recluse he necessarily judged the world, and as necessarily found it wanting. Indeed, it may fairly be said that he held in utter contempt the entire machinery of fashion, and looked upon the whole thing as a toy for imbeciles. To say that he hated it would be unjust, for, like most sensible people, he held hatred to be an elixir far too precious to be wasted on trivial matters. He simply took up society and then let it drop, and he did so not because it soiled his gloves, but because it did not seem worth the holding.

Such views as he cared to express on this subject are unmarked by any striking vividness of originality; for the most part they are simple, every-day observations, as pertinent to Europe half a century ago as to contemporary London and New York, and imply, briefly, that society is a mill of the conventional which grinds individualities into a tiresome sameness of sample. Individuality was like a strong-box into which Schopenhauer placed all his valuables, and to which, we are led to believe, he clung with all his might and main. Rather than have it tampered with he carried it off to a hermitage and kept it there, one might say, in cotton. It may be, however, that the underlying reason of the sombre obliqueness with which he viewed the world at large sprang from a cause which was natural, if commonplace; it did not appreciate him. Nor is this very surprising; society, as a rule, has an immense fund of appreciation, which it lavishes liberally on every merit, save alone that of intellectual ability; on

this it looks askant, or, as Schopenhauer says, "as if it were smuggled." "Furthermore," he goes on to say, "good society, so called, not only brings one in contact with a lot of people whom he can neither approve of nor like, but it will not permit us to be ourselves, to be such as our nature demands; on the contrary, it compels us, that we may remain on the same diapason with the rest, to shrivel up completely, and even at times to appear deformed."

Wit and repartee are admittedly out of place save among one's peers; in ordinary society such manifestations are either not understood, or looked upon as dreadfully bad form. For that matter, it is only the novice who thinks that brilliant conversational powers will serve as passport; as a rule, it does nothing of the sort; rather does it excite among the majority a feeling nearly akin to hatred, and which is all the more bitter because it must be concealed.

"Ordinarily," Schopenhauer says, "when two people are talking together, so soon as one of them notices a great superiority on the part of the other he tacitly concludes, and without definite reason for so doing, that his own inferiority has been noticed by his companion, for whom he immediately conceives a blind resentment, even a violent dislike; nor in this is he much to be blamed, for what is a display of wit and judgment but an accusation to others of their own commonplace stupidity and dullness? To please in society, therefore, one needs to be scatter-brained or ignorant; and it is precisely those who are the one or the other, or even both, who are welcome and well received."

From Schopenhauer's standpoint, then, the society

that is worth the trouble of cultivating is not such as is told of in the morning papers. The ball-goers, the dinner-givers, the pleasure-seekers of every class and denomination, were to him mentally insolvent, and unable to offer any indemnity for the boredom and fatigue which their reunions and conversation created. To be socially inclined was to him irrefutable evidence of a vacuous mind; and with some of that grim humor which characterized much of his work, he compared the modern assembly to that Russian orchestra which, composed of horns that have but one note apiece, is harmonious only through the exact coincidence of each instrument; taken separately, each one is appallingly monotonous, and it is only in conjunction with others that they amount to anything at all. So it is, he finds, with the majority of people; individually, they seem to have but one thought, and are in consequence both tiresome and sociable.

There is a tolerably familiar anecdote of Louis XIII., which represents that feeble monarch as hailing one of his officers with the bland suggestion that they should wile away the hour in common boredom: "Venez, monsieur," run the historic words, "allons nous ennuyer ensemble;" and it is perhaps this self-same, but unanalyzed motive which leads so many to ease their weariness in the companionship of their fellows, for, after all, it cannot but be admitted that the most gregarious seek the presence of others, and even of those for whom they care nothing, not so much for the sake of society as to get away from themselves and the dull monotone of an empty head.

Such, at any rate, is Schopenhauer's idea; and he is careful, in pointing to the retired existence of all really distinguished thinkers, to note that the desire

for companionship is not derived from a love of society, but from a fear of solitude, and that so soon as the latter is mastered there is no further desire to mingle with the crowd. The only society, therefore, that is worth the trouble of cultivation is that of one's own self; in this Schopenhauer apparently makes no exception; however closely the bonds of love or friendship may be woven, there is always some clash of temperament; an echoless shock it may be, but to nerves properly attuned none the less unpleasant. In regard to the society of the distinguished thinkers, of whose conspicuous solitude he makes constant parade, nothing is said; but it is perhaps allowable to suppose that genius, when it does descend from its lofty seclusion, quickly tires of giving, giving always, without return, and on its summits fraternizes as seldom with its peers as kings do with their equals. In brief, then, the sociability of man is in an inverse ratio to his intellectual value, and to say of some one "he is not at all sociable," may be generally taken to mean "he is a man of great ability."

The praises of solitude have been written over and over again; almost all the essayists, and most of the poets, have expatiated more or less volubly on its charms, but no one has entered so thoroughly into the core of the subject as did this spectacled misanthrope. Emerson has told a quaint little story of a friend who took an exquisite delight in thinking of the incalculable number of places where he was not, and whose idea of felicity was to dwell far off somewhere among the back stars, "there to wear out ages in solitude, and forget memory itself." Had Schopenhauer known this gentleman he would have loved him, though perhaps at a distance; as it was, he expressed an approval that was well-nigh rapturous of La Bruyère's well-known axiom: "All our

misfortunes come from an inability to be alone," and at measured intervals repeated Voltaire's maxim that "the world is full of people who are not worth speaking to." His own ideas on the subject savor highly of the epigrammatic. "Solitude," he says, "offers a double advantage to the thinker: the first in being with himself, the second in not being with others."

The love of solitude, however, cannot be considered otherwise than as an acquired taste; it must come as the result of experience and reflection, and advance with the development of the intellect as well as with the progress of age. A child will cry with fright if it be left alone even for a moment; in boyhood, solitude is a severe penance; young men are eminently sociable, and it is only the more elevated among them who from time to time wander off by themselves; but even so, a day passed in strict seclusion is no easy matter. In middle age, it is not so difficult, while to the aged, solitude seems the natural element. But in each individual, separately considered, the growth of the inclination for solitude is always in proportion to the strength of the intellect, and, according to Schopenhauer, it is never thoroughly matured until the individual becomes firmly convinced that society is the most disagreeable of all the unpleasant things in the world.

To this conclusion both Petrarch and Zimmerman came in their respective works on solitude. Chamfort says somewhere, very wittily, "It is sometimes said of a man that he lives alone and does not care for society; this is very much the same as saying that he does not care for exercise, because he does not make excursions at night in the forest of Bondy." In short,

all those whom Prometheus has fashioned from his finer clay have brought testimony of like purport. To Schopenhauer a desire for solitude was a sure indication of aristocratic tastes. "Every blackguard," he says, "is pitiably sociable, but true nobility is detected in the man who finds no pleasure in the companionship of others, and who, in preferring solitude to society, gradually acquires the conviction that, save in rare exceptions, there is little choice between isolation and vulgarity." Angelus Silesius, whose name has descended to us in a halo of Christian tenderness, bears witness to the truth of this theory,

> "Though solitude is hard, yet the refined
> Will still in ev'ry place a desert find."

It is especially in old age, when one has ceased to expect anything in particular from the generality of mankind, when one has become pretty well satisfied that in the long run men do not improve on acquaintance, and when one is usually divested of those illusions which make the companionship of others seem desirable,—it is at this period that the taste for solitude, which heretofore has demanded a succession of struggles, becomes at once natural and matter of fact. One feels, then, as much at ease therein as the fish does at high water.

But in spite of the advantages of solitude there is a hackneyed proverb about the rose and the thorn which has here a most direct application. In the same manner that every breath of frosty air injuriously affects any one who constantly keeps to his own room, so does a man's disposition become so sensitive in solitude that he is vexed and annoyed at the most trivial incident, at a word, or even at an

expression of the countenance. It is hard, however, to catch Schopenhauer napping, and for this he has a remedy which, if not within the reach of all, is none the less efficacious. His recipe is simply that every aspirant should accustom himself to carry a part of his solitude into society, and learn to be alone even in a crowd; in other words, not to tell others at once what he thinks, and not to pay much attention to what others may say; in this way he will in a measure keep himself unaffected by the stupidities which must necessarily surge about him, and harden himself to exterior influences.

As has been noted, it was far from Schopenhauer's intention to recommend an idle folding of the hands. Solitude is all very well, but to be habitable it must be peopled with thoughts and deeds; the essence of life is movement, and in inaction it is a most difficult thing to be tranquil. Indeed, the most thoughtless must do something, even if that something consist but in a tattoo beaten on the window-pane. Schopenhauer's words, however, are presumably not addressed to thoughtless people. To struggle and cope is, he says, as much of a necessity to man as burrowing is to the mole. To conquer resistance constitutes the fullness of human delight, and whether the obstacles are of a material nature, as in action and exercise, or purely mental, as in study and research, it is the combat and the victory that bring happiness with them.

In treating of our conduct to others, Schopenhauer seems always to be peering down and sounding bottom in unfathomed depths of the human heart, and to be taking measure of those crevices and sinuosities for which Balzac and La Rochefoucauld, with all their equipment of bitterness, possessed no

adequate compass. The result of his soundings and measurements is a lesson of circumspection and indulgence, of which the first stands as guarantee against prejudice, and the second as shelter from quarrels and disputes. Machiavelli warned every one to as carefully avoid an injury to the self-esteem of an inferior as one would the commission of a crime. Schopenhauer goes even further; his theory is that whoever is obliged to live among his fellows should never repulse any one, however pitiful, wicked, or ridiculous his character may be; on the contrary, he should accept him as something immutable, and consider that there must necessarily be some one of that class too. If he does otherwise he commits not only an imprudence, but provokes a life-long enmity, for, after all, no one can modify his own character, and if a man is condemned unreservedly there is, of necessity, nothing left for him to do but to declare war to the knife. It is for this reason that when one wishes, or is obliged to live among his fellow-creatures, it becomes necessary to let each one work out his own nature and accept each individual as he stands; the most that can be done is to attempt to utilize the qualities and dispositions of each, so far as they may be adaptable, but in no case is a man to be condemned purely and simply for what he is. This is the true signification of the dictum, Live and let live.

Meanwhile, in learning how to treat others it will not come amiss, Schopenhauer goes on to say, to exercise a little patience on any of the inanimate objects which in virtue of some physical or mechanical necessity obstinately annoy and thwart us every day; for in so doing we learn to bestow on our fellows the patience already acquired, and in this manner become accustomed to the thought that they, too, whenever they form an obstacle to our wishes, do so

because they cannot help it, in virtue of a natural law which is as rigorous as that which acts on inanimate things, and because it is as absurd to get angry with them as to be annoyed at the stone which slips between our feet.

But in all this Schopenhauer is far from recommending any over-indulgence or excess of amiability, for he readily recognizes that the majority of people are like children, who become pert as soon as they are spoiled. Refuse a loan to a friend, he says, and you will not lose him as readily as you would if you had advanced the money; in the same manner a trace of haughtiness and indifference on your part will generally quell any of those preliminary symptoms of arrogance that follow upon too much kindness. Indeed, it is the idea that one has need of them that few men can bear,—they become presumptuous at once; and it is for this reason that there are so few with whom one can be really intimate.

Most especially should we avoid any familiarity with vulgar natures. "If by chance an inferior imagines for a moment that I have more need of him than he has of me, he will suddenly act as though I had stolen something from him, and hurry to revenge himself and get his property back." In brief, the only way in which superiority can be maintained is in letting others see that we have no need of them at all. Moreover, Schopenhauer notes, it is a good plan to appear a trifle disdainful from time to time; such an attitude has a strengthening effect on friendship: "Chi non istima, vien stimato" (he who shows no respect is respected himself) runs the sagacious Italian proverb. But above all, if any one does possess a high value in our eyes it should be hidden from him as a

sin. This advice is not particularly exhilarating, but it is sound. Too much kindness disagrees with dogs, to say nothing of men.

It is a curious fact that the more intellectual a man is the more easily he is deceived. There seems to be something almost incompatible between a high degree of culture and an extended knowledge of men and things, whereas, in the case of people of ordinary calibre, a lack of experience will not necessarily hinder them from properly conducting their affairs; they possess, as it were, an *a priori* knowledge which is furnished to them by their own nature, and it is precisely the absence of this knowledge that causes the mistakes of the more refined. Even when a man has learned from the teaching of others and through his own experience just what he may expect from men in general, even when he is thoroughly convinced that five sixths of them are so constituted that it is better for him to have nothing at all to do with them, even then, his knowledge is insufficient to preserve him from many false calculations. A presumable wiseacre, for instance, may accidentally be drawn into the society of people with whom he is unacquainted, and be astonished to find that in conversation and manners they are sensible, loyal, and sincere, and, perhaps, intelligent and witty. In that case, Schopenhauer warns him to keep well on his guard, for the reason that Nature is entirely unlike the dramaturge who, when he wishes to create a scoundrel or a simpleton, sets about it so awkwardly that he seems to be standing behind each character in turn, and in disavowing their gestures and words to be warning the audience that one is a ruffian and the other a fool, and that no one is to believe a word that they say. It is not at all in this way that Nature acts: her

method is that of Shakespeare and Goethe, in whose plays each person, be he the Devil himself, speaks as he ought to, and is conceived so realistically that he attracts and commands attention. To think, then, that the Devil goes about with horns, and the fool with bells, is to lay one's self open to a continual deception, for, as a rule, our moralist says, men behave very much like the moon or like the hunchback; they show only one side, and even then they have a peculiar talent for making up their faces into a species of mask, which exactly represents *what they ought to be*, and this they assume whenever they wish to be well received. Put not your trust in princes, say some; Schopenhauer's advice is, Put not your trust in masks; and to substantiate his warning he quotes an old proverb, which holds that no matter how vicious a dog may be he can still wag his tail.

To all these rules and suggestions there are, of course, exceptions; there are even exceptions that are incommensurably great, for the difference between individuals is gigantic, but taken as a whole, Schopenhauer condemns the world as irreclaimably bad, and it may be added that one does not need to be a professional pessimist to arrive at very nearly the same conclusion. But beyond these broad recommendations a few others are given on our proper bearing and attitude to the world at large, and which, summed up in his own words, amount, in brief, to the teaching that one half of all wisdom consists in neither loving nor hating, and the other half in saying nothing and believing nothing.

Lamennais exclaimed one day, "My soul was born with a sore," and to some it may perhaps seem that on Schopenhauer's heart an ulcer had battened during each of the seventy years that formed his life.

Certainly he has appeared to force the note many times, but it is permissible to doubt that he prepared a single paragraph in which he expressed himself otherwise than as he really thought. In his pessimism there is no pose and as little affectation; he wrote only what he felt to be true, and he did so with a cheerful indifference to approval or dislike; his position was simply that of a notary drawing up provisos and conditions in strict accord with the statutes of life of which he stood as witness. His mother, who had little cause to come forward as an eulogist, paid him—years after their separation—this one sincere tribute: "With all his vagaries," she said, "I have never known my son to tell a lie." Other encomiums have, of course, been passed upon him, but it is impossible to imagine one more glorious than this. Over and above his disregard of sham and falsehood, beyond his theory of force and the seductions of his ethics, Schopenhauer is chiefly remarkable in this: that he was the first to detect and logically explain that universal nausea which, circulating from one end of Europe to the other, presents those symptoms of melancholy and disillusion which, patent to every observer, are indubitably born of the insufficiencies of modern civilization.

Where, then, it may be asked, for this malady of the refined, are the borderlands of happiness to be found? From the standpoint of this teacher the answer is that they are discoverable simply and solely in an unobtrusive culture of self, in a withdrawal from every aggressive influence, and above all in a supreme indifference which, culpable though alluring, permits the neophyte to declaim with Baudelaire,—

"Résigne-toi, mon cœur, dors ton
sommeil de brute."

The foregoing attempt to winnow some of the finer fibres of thought from the six volumes which form the complete edition of Schopenhauer's works leaves admittedly much to be desired. There has been, as the phrase goes, an *embarras des richesses*, and in consequence much attendant indecision as to the choice to be made of different yet equally interesting topics. The passages that have been selected and annotated in this and in the preceding chapter have been, it may be explained, so selected, because they seemed, when arranged with some attempt at orderly sequence, to present in the fewest possible words the essence of the main idea which runs through the entire philosophy, and which in the absence of some such arrangement demands a concentration more prolonged than is usually at the disposal of the ordinary reader. Those who are already acquainted with Schopenhauer's works, and who may do the present writer the honor of reading this exposition, will perhaps object to it on the ground that it does not enter sufficiently into the scientific side of the doctrine, and through this neglect leaves the reader in the dark as to its true value. To this presumable objection the writer begs leave to make answer that the scientific aspect of the doctrine has been so exhaustively treated by others that it has seemed to him a waste of time to enter into any further consideration of a subject whose true value, in spite of the numberless controversies and arguments which it continues to create, still remains undetermined. Moreover, as will have been readily

seen, the foregoing pages have in no sense been addressed to the scientist, and that for the reason that exact information is only obtainable from the philosophy itself, or from such a complete and, therefore, voluminous analysis as would be out of place in a treatise of this description. The aim of these chapters is but to draw in outline the principal features of this doctrine, and in so doing to present in the absence of complete translations a little of that vigor and color which has raised the original to the prominent position it holds among the foremost works of modern thought. No attempt at the polemical has been made, and this for the reason that it is seldom advisable to attack the truth; the notations and criticisms which have been offered have been prepared, not with the wish to controvert, but rather with the hope that they might serve to a clearer understanding of the whole philosophy.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT QUIETUS.

It is related of Schopenhauer that he was in the habit of putting down a gold piece on the *table d'hôte* where he dined, and of taking it up again when the dinner was ended. This gold piece, he explained to his Boswell, was for the waiter the first time that any one of the different officers, who frequented the dining-room, was heard discussing a loftier topic

than that which is circled in wine, woman, and song. As the story runs, no occasion ever presented itself in which he could in this manner express his pleasure and contentment; but had he lived long enough to meet Lieutenant Von Hartmann there is little doubt that the gold piece would have formed an immediate and rightful part of the waiter's perquisites.

This gentleman, who is now no longer an officer, but simply a thinker and a man of letters, may, in many respects, be regarded as Schopenhauer's direct descendant. To the world at large very little concerning him is known, and that little is contained in a modest autobiography which appeared a few years ago, and to which his publisher has since added a supplement.

The meagre details that are furnished therein amount, in brief, to this: Eduard von Hartmann was born in 1842, in Berlin, in which city he passed an uneventful boyhood. The school which he attended, and which like most other schools forced the pupils to master a quantity of subjects whose usefulness may be questioned, brought him into an almost open revolt against a system of education which, in nine cases out of ten, is nothing more than a pure waste of time. On leaving the gymnasium he decided, for reasons which to the average German must seem fantastic, to enter the military service at once instead of passing the usual semesters at a university. To this budding pessimist student life seemed to offer but dull variations between commonplaceness and vulgarity: to listen or not to listen to sundry poorly expressed lectures by day, to engulf at night a certain quantity of beer in stone measures, and to diversify these occupations in receiving slashes on the cheek-

bone, or in affording amusement to the Hebes of Prussian restaurants, was not to him the life that was called ideal. Very wisely, then, and in accordance with the example which his father had already given, he chose in a military career a profession most apt to satisfy those inclinations of the scientist and of the artist which had already begun to exert an influence upon him.

In the year 1858 Herr von Hartmann entered the crack artillery regiment of Berlin as volunteer. He then passed three years at the artillery school, intermingling the scientific studies of his profession with artistic and philosophic researches, and frequenting meanwhile the refined society to which his family belonged. About this time a rheumatic affection, which had first declared itself toward the close of his school-days, became complicated with a fracture of some of the delicate machinery of the knee. The injury was both painful and incurable, and in 1864 he was obliged to resign his position, and thereupon left the army with the grade of first lieutenant. These latter details are given by way of counterbalance to the calumnies of his enemies, who, in explaining his pessimism by the state of his health, —which they insinuate was brought about by excessive and unusual debauchery,—have in one way and another managed to vituperate his chief work into nine editions.

On leaving the army he sought a career first as painter and then as musician; it did not take him long, however, to discover that his vocation was not such as is found in purely artistic pursuits; "the bankruptcy of all my ambitions," he says, "was complete; there remained to me but one thing, and that was thought." It was from thought, then, that he

demanded a consolation and an employment, and turning to metaphysics he began at once to plan his "Philosophy of the Unconscious." Meanwhile, for his own distraction and instruction he had written a few essays, of which but one was destined to see the light of day. This monograph, "Die dialektische Methode," was so favorably viewed at Rostock, that he received therefrom the degree and title of Doctor of Philosophy.

"The Philosophy of the Unconscious," when completed, remained a year in his closet, and was only published in 1868, owing to an accidental meeting with an intelligent publisher. Before, as since, the appearance and success of this work, which is very generally considered as the chief philosophical event of the last two decades, Dr. von Hartmann has lived at Berlin, where he endeavors in every-day life to prove the practical value of evolutionary pessimism, which it is his wish to substitute for the indifferentism and quietist doctrines of Schopenhauer.

Personally, Dr. von Hartmann is a very attractive individual, and his attractiveness is increased by the fact that there is nothing commonplace, and at the same time nothing affected about him. When I called at his house, I found him coiled up in a rug on one of those long chairs that are familiar to every ocean traveler. My first impression was that I was in the presence of a giant; and as the Berlinese as a race are notoriously tall, I was only surprised at the great size of his head, which differed singularly from that of the ordinary Prussian. His hair was brushed back from his forehead in the manner popularly termed *à la Russe*, but which is more noticeable in Vienna than in St. Petersburg; his eyes, which were large and

luminous, possessed an expression of such indulgence as would put the most timid visitor at ease. Owing partly to the arrangement of his hair, his forehead seemed to me to be the most expansive that I had ever seen; the lower part of his face was hidden in a beard which descended very nearly to his waist, while as for his moustache, it is, I think, the longest in metaphysics. In some way or another I had gotten to believe that it was part of the professional philosopher to be both self-contained and absent-minded; I always pictured him as a class as wearing spectacles far down on the nose, as being somewhat snuffy, and carelessly tired in loose and shabby dressing-gown. I can give no reason for this fancy of mine other than that it is one of those pictures which we all draw of people and places that we have not seen. If I remember rightly, Mr. Sala said that he imagined Leipzig to be a city of very squat houses, in which dwelt little girls in blue skirts, and this until he got there and found that it was precisely like any other of its kind.

As a child, and indeed until very lately, I invariably thought of Hungary as having red roads, bordered by crimson houses and bluffs of green, while all about I saw in fancy splendid horses prancing in rich caparisons; but, as any traveler will admit, Hungary, in point of natural effects, is as humdrum as Connecticut; for real color, I suppose one must go to Japan, and yet there are many who have done so and then returned utterly disillusioned. Dr. von Hartmann took away my illusion about the philosopher; he had a rug, it is true, but no dressing-gown, or at least not one which was visible, and there was nothing of the careless mien and abstracted attitudes which I had expected; to use a current phrase, he was very wide awake, and I may

add that to one who has lived among Germans he seemed refreshingly hospitable and graciously courteous.

Even in its most pleasant season, Berlin is not a pleasant city; a lounge of but half an hour on the Unter den Linden results through unconscious imitation in an enforced quickstep; to begin with, there are too many big houses, and then there are too many big soldiers; and while the soldiers present to the stranger an appearance of arrogant hostility, the houses, not to be outdone, try to look as much like the soldiers as possible, and loom up in alert unbending aggressiveness; indeed, I have now in my mind a certain street which, when I looked down it, almost got up and threatened me. I experienced, therefore, a subtle pleasure on discovering that out of the whole of rigid Berlin Dr. von Hartmann had chosen his residence in the most unsoldierly, and for that reason the most attractive part; and it was to this quarter of the city that I went to visit the man who, in spite of certain vagaries of thought, may be considered as Germany's first thinker. When he had disentangled himself from the folds of his rug, the impression which had been produced by the size of his head and the breadth of his shoulders vanished entirely. I thought for the moment of the quaint myths of the earlier Teutons, of the gnomes and kobolds, for Dr. von Hartmann, while massive in head and shoulders, is yet short and undersized, and the suggestion of the Rhine legends which his appearance caused was heightened by the strange effect produced by the luxuriance of his beard and moustache.

He had barely spoken, however, before I recognized in him not only the man of the world, which goes

without the telling, but the gentleman, and, in a moment, the thinker. Stendhal says somewhere, in speaking of German, that it took him "two whole years to forget the beastly language." Stendhal was what is termed nowadays an impressionist, and his expression may perhaps on that account be excused; in any event German is decidedly an unpleasant tongue; it is very rich, rich even to exuberance, and when it is well handled it is to the initiate delightful in many respects; but to the Latin, and the average Anglo-Saxon, it is terribly tortuous, and most easy to lose one's way in. I had hoped, therefore, that I might be allowed to talk with Dr. von Hartmann in some more flowing form of speech, but as he preferred German, it was not, of course, my place to rebel, and I soon found that I had nothing to regret. I have had in the Fatherland the privilege of hearing some very accomplished actors, and I have also sat beneath some very eloquent speakers, but the amplitude and resources of the German language were first made clear to me by this gentleman. When he spoke, I may say, without exaggeration, that his words seemed less like figures of speech than evocations of pictures. I had puzzled for some time over a particular point in his teaching, and when I told him of my difficulty he drew down before me a series of illustrations and examples, which were as well defined as though they formed a panorama on the wall; and therewithal was such a fluency of verb, such a precision of adjective, and such a nicety of accent, that for the first and only time I loved the German language.

Dr. von Hartmann is in no sense a misanthrope. He leads a quiet and easy life, demonstrating by his own example that pessimism is not a gospel of desolation. Personally, he has had many grave misfortunes; he

has suffered in health, in name, and in purse, he has lost many who were most dear to him, but his laugh is as prompt and as frank as a boy's. At the head of his table sits a gracious and charming woman, his children are rich in strength and spirits, and an observer lately said of him and his family, "If you wish to see happy and contented faces, go call on the Hartmanns."

Beyond writing a dozen or more monographs, and dissertations on philosophical subjects, Dr. von Hartmann has also charmed the public with two elaborate and well-conceived poems. His chief claim to recognition, however, and the one which has placed him at the head of contemporary metaphysics, is the work already mentioned, in which, somewhat after the manner of his predecessor, and yet with a diffuseness of argument which had no part in Schopenhauer's system, he reduces the motor forces of the universe to a dual principle which he terms the *Unbewussten*, or the Unconscious.

It is unnecessary to enter into any minute examination of this theory of his, in which, with a juggle of fancies and facts, he tries to reconcile the teaching of Hegel with that of Schopenhauer, for, however it may be considered, it is in any event but loosely connected with that part of his philosophy which treats of the matter in hand.

It will be sufficient for the understanding of what is to follow, to note simply that after examining the forms of phenomenal existence, matter, life organic and inorganic, humanity, and so on, he presents the Unconscious as the One-in-all, the Universal soul, from which, through determined laws, the

multiplicity of individuals and characters is derived. This one-in-all is sovereignly wise, and the world is admirable in every respect; but while he argues in this way that the world is the best one possible, he has no difficulty in showing that life itself is irreclaimably miserable.

The originality of his system consists in a theory of optimistic evolution as counterbalanced by a pessimistic analysis of life, and also in the manner in which, with a glut of curious argument, he concludes that as the world's *progressus* does not tend to either universal or even individual happiness, the great aim of science should be to emancipate man from the love of life, and in this wise lead the world back to chaos.

The main idea runs somewhat as follows. The interest of the Unconscious is opposed to our own; it would be to our advantage not to live, it is to the advantage of the Unconscious that we should do so, and that others should be brought into existence through us. The Unconscious, therefore, in the furtherment of its aims, has surrounded man with such illusions as are capable of deluding him into the belief that life is a pleasant thing, well worth the living. The instincts that are within us are but the different forms beneath which this unreasoning desire to live is at work, and with which the Unconscious inspires man and moulds him to its profit. Hence the energy so foolishly expended for the protection of an existence which is but the right to suffer, hence the erroneous idea which is formed of the pain and pleasure derivable from life, and hence the modification of past disenchantments through the influence of fresh and newer hopes.

With regard to happiness, there are, according to Hartmann, three periods or forms of illusion, from all of which the world must be thoroughly freed before the great aim of science can be attained. The first of these illusions consists in the idea that under certain circumstances happiness is now obtainable on earth; the second, in the belief that happiness is realizable in a future state; and the third, in the opinion that happiness will be discovered in the march of progress through the coming centuries.

Of these three ideas, the first has for some time past been recognized by many as a chimera. In certain quarters the decomposition of the second has already begun, but the belief in the reality of the third is unquestionably the paramount conviction of the present century. When each of these three illusions has been utterly routed and universally done away with, then, Hartmann considers, the world will be ripe for its great quietus.

The first of these three forms is, of course, the most tenacious; indeed, it is an incontestible fact that man, even when miserable, clings to life, and loves it not only when there is some vague hope of a brighter future, but even under its most distressing conditions. It is, therefore, against this illusion that pessimism, to be successful, must rain the hardest blows.

The views of many eminent writers on this subject have already been expressed in the course of these pages, but their views, while in a measure important, should nevertheless be received with a certain amount of caution, for they emanate from superior minds, in which melancholy as the attribute of genius constantly presides.

Let us imagine, then, with Hartmann, a man who is not a genius, but simply a man of ordinary culture, enjoying the advantages of an enviable position; a man who is neither wearied by pleasure nor oppressed by exceptional misfortunes; in brief, a man capable of comparing the advantages which he enjoys with the disadvantages of inferior members of society; let us suppose that Death comes to this man and speaks somewhat as follows: "Your hour is at hand; it remains with you, however, to live at once a new life, with the past entirely effaced, or to accept the grave as it is."

There can be little doubt, if this hypothetical individual has not lived carelessly and thoughtlessly, and does not permit his judgment to be biased by the desire for life at any price, that he would choose death in preference to another existence, in which he would be assured of none of the favorable conditions which he had hitherto enjoyed. He will recommence his own life, perhaps, but no other of an inferior grade.

This choice, however, would be that of an intelligent man, and might be objected to on a ground not dissimilar to the one already advanced against the judgments of genius. But let us follow Hartmann still further, and in descending the spiral of humanity put the same question to every one we meet; let us take, for instance, a woodcutter, a Hottentot, or an orang-outang, and ask of each which he prefers, death, or a new existence in the body of a hippopotamus or a flea. Each will answer, "death," but none of them will hesitate between their own lives and death; and if a like question be put to the hippopotamus and the flea, their answers will be precisely similar.

The difference in the comparative judgment that each would bring to bear on his own life, and on that of life in an inferior degree, results evidently from the fact that on being questioned each enters imaginatively into the existence of the lower creation, and at once judges its condition to be insupportable. The difference between the opinion which the flea holds on the value of its own existence and our own private judgment on this insect is derived simply from the fact that the flea has a quantity of absurd illusions which we do not share, and these illusions cause it such an excess of imaginary happiness that in consequence it prefers its own life to death. In this the flea is not wrong; on the contrary, it is quite right, for the value of an existence can only be measured in accordance with its natural limitations. In this sense illusion is as serviceable as truth.

From this introduction it follows quite of itself that each and every creature is capable of weighing the discomforts of an existence inferior to that in which it dwells, and yet is unable to rightly judge its own. Each can discern the illusions with which its inferior is surrounded, but is always defenseless against its own, save under exceptional circumstances, as in the case of genius. Hartmann concludes, therefore, very logically that an intelligence which is capable of embracing every form of life would condemn existence in its totality in the same manner that an intelligence relatively restricted condemns it in part.

In drawing up the balance-sheet of life, Hartmann differs from Schopenhauer on the question of the purely negative character of pleasure. That pleasure is at times a negative condition, as in the cessation of pain, he willingly admits, but from his standpoint it

is something else besides; it may be either positive, although derived from an illusion, as in love, or real, as in art and science. Nevertheless, the predominance of pain over pleasure seems to be firmly established, and his examination of this subject is not without a repellant interest.

The four greatest blessings of life are admittedly health, youth, liberty, and well-being; but from their nature, Hartmann points out, these things are incapable of raising man out of indifference into pleasure save only as they may help to diminish an anterior pain, or guard him from a possible discomfort. Take the case of health, for instance; no man thinks of his nerves until they are affected, nor yet of his eyes until they ache; indeed, it may fairly be said that a man who is in perfect condition only knows that he has a body because he sees and touches it. Liberty may be regarded in much the same manner: it is unnoticed until it is in some way interfered with; while youth, which is the most propitious condition of life, is in itself but capability and possibility, and not possession, nor yet delight.

Well-being, the certainty of shelter from need and privation, Hartmann very rightly considers merely as the *sine qua non* of life in its baldest aspect, for, he argues, were it otherwise, the simple fact of living would satisfy and content us; but we all know that an assured existence is a torment if nothing fills the gap.

In the menagerie of beasts that torture life there is one, Baudelaire says in his easy metre, that is more hideous than all the rest; it is:—

> ... "l'ennui! L'œil chargé d'un pleur
> involontaire

Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka
—
Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat,
—Hypocrite lecteur,—mon semblable,—
mon frère!"

This insupportable companion of inaction is usually banished by work; but then, to him who is obliged to labor, is not work often distasteful, and even a species of misfortune? Indeed, there are few, if any, who ever work save under compulsion; and whether the compulsion is caused by the attracting force of fame, the desire to escape from want, or comes simply as a promise of relief from boredom, the incentive and necessity are one and the same. It is true that man when at work is consoled by the thought of rest, but then work and rest merely serve to change his position, and they do so very much in the same manner as that uneasiness which forces the invalid to turn in bed, and then to turn back again, when it has shown him that the second position is no better than the first.

The great blessings of life, therefore, reduce themselves, in brief, to this: they represent but that affranchisement from pain which is equivalent to a state of pure indifference; but as no one reaches this condition save momentarily and by accident, it seems to follow that life has less charm than non-existence, which represents indifference in its most absolute and unquestioned form.

This state of beatitude is yet to be acquired; meanwhile, as Schiller says, so long as philosophy does not govern the world, hunger and love will suffice to keep it in motion. After the four causes of contentment, Hartmann's views on the two incentives

to activity remain to be examined.

In regard to the first, it may be said without extravagance that the sufferings of hunger rule the greater portion of the 1300 millions of the earth's inhabitants. Europe not long since averaged a famine every seven years; now, the facilities of communication have replaced famine with an increased valuation of food. Death is the rarest and the least important evil that hunger occasions; what is most to be regarded is the physical and intellectual impoverishment, the mortality among children, and the particular maladies which it engenders.

According to Hartmann, the analysis of hunger shows that in satisfying its demands the individual does not raise his sensibility above a state of pure indifference. He may, it is true, under favorable circumstances, cause a certain pleasure to predominate over suffering by means of taste and digestion; but in the animal kingdom, as in humanity, taken as a whole, the tortures caused by hunger are greatly in excess of any pleasures that may attach to it. In fact, from Hartmann's standpoint, the necessity of eating is in itself a misfortune.

After all that has been said through centuries of literature on the subject of love, it is certainly difficult to be original; but Hartmann has at least the merit of presenting it in a more abstract light, and from a less alluring standpoint than any other writer who has handled the subject. For love, according to his views, is either contrary to the laws of society, and as such environed by perils and pains, vice and degradation, or it is perfectly legal, and, in that case, quickly extinguished. "In the majority of cases," he says, "insurmountable obstacles arise between the

two lovers and cause a consequent and immense despair, while in the rarer and more fortunate instances the expected happiness turns out to be purely illusory."

It is, however, as hard to love as it is not to love; but he (Hartmann) says, "Who once recognizes that the happiness which it offers is but a chimera, and that its pains are greater than its pleasures, will, while unable perhaps to escape entirely from its allurements, be none the less able to judge it differently from the novice, and therefore capable of diminishing some of its suffering, and some of the disproportion between its joys and its sorrows." According to this savage moralist, then, love is either an illusory and quickly vanishing happiness, or an actual suffering, and resembles hunger precisely in that it is in itself and to the individual a veritable curse.

Hartmann judges marriage with an epigram borrowed from Lessing: "There is, at most, but one disagreeable woman in the world; it is only a pity that every man gets her for himself." In very much the same manner are the ties of family and friendship weighed and judged. Scattered here and there is some reflection of Schopenhauer's wit and wisdom, but generally the discussion is defective, and lacks the grace of style and purity of diction which characterized the latter writer. The sentiments of honor, public esteem, ambition, and glory depend, he says, on the opinion of others, and are therefore merely toys of the imagination, "for my joys and troubles exist in my mind, and not in the minds of other people. Their opinion concerning me has merely a conventional value, and not one which is

effective for me."

But to him who journeys through the desert called life, there is still one suave and green oasis. Hartmann is not utterly relentless, and though perhaps on all other subjects he may seem skeptical as a ragpicker, he has yet a word or two of cheer for art and science. These pleasant lands, however, are only traversable by rare and privileged natures, for if from the pleasure which attaches to music, painting, poetry, philosophy, and science, a deduction be made of all that which is but sham, dilettanteism, and vanity, the more considerable part of this supreme resource will be found to have disappeared. That which remains over is the compensation which nature preserves as recompense to the extreme sensibility of the artist and thinker, to whom the miseries of life are far more poignant than to other men, whose sensibilities are duller and less impressionable. Now, if the ubiquity of suffering is admitted, the temperament of this latter class is, in the long run, undoubtedly preferable to the more refined organization of the artist; for, after all, a state of comparative insensibility is evidently not too dearly bought, when the price is merely the lack of a delight, whose absence is not a privation, and which, to those able to appreciate it, is as rare as it is limited in duration. Moreover, even the real and ineffaceable pleasures which the thinker and artist enjoy are obtainable only after much trouble and discomfort.

Genius does not fall from the skies ready-made and complete in armor and equipment; the study which is to develop it is a task painful and tiresome, whose pleasures are rare, and, generally speaking, but those of anticipation and vanquished obstacles. Each art

has its mechanical side, which demands a long apprenticeship; and even then, after the preliminary preparation, the only pleasant moments are those of conception, which, in turn, are directly succeeded by the long hours of technical execution.

In the case of the amateur, the pleasure of listening to good music, of seeing a fine actor, or of looking at works of art, is undoubtedly the one that causes the least amount of inconvenience, and yet Hartmann is not to be blamed for noting that even this pleasure is seldom unalloyed. In the first place, there is the bother of going to the picture-gallery; then there is the bad air and hubbub in the theatre; after this come the dangers of catching cold, of being run into, or annoyed in a dozen different ways, and especially the fatigue of watching and listening.

In the case of the artist there are the inevitable deceptions; the struggles with envy, the indifference and disdain of the public. Chamfort was wont to exclaim, "The public indeed! how many idiots does it take to make a public?" The public, nevertheless, has the ability to make itself very disagreeable, and not every one courts its smile with success. If, in addition to all these things, the nervous organization of the thinker, more vibrant a thousandfold than that of other men, is taken into consideration, it will be seen that Hartmann is not wrong in stating that the pleasures to which this class is privileged are expiated by a greater sensibility to pain.

But while art is not without its disadvantages, Hartmann declares that life still holds one solace that is supreme and unalloyed. "Unconscious sleep," he says, "is relatively the happiest condition, for it is the only one from which pain is completely banished.

With dreams, however, all the miseries of life return; and happiness, when it then appears, does so only in the vague form of an agreeable sensation, such as that of being freed from the body, or flying through the air. The pleasures of art and science, the only ones which could reconcile a sensible man to life, are intangible herein, while suffering, on the other hand, appears in its most positive form."

Among the different factors which are generally supposed to be more or less productive of happiness, wealth or its symbol, money, usually represents the enchanted wand that opens the gate to every joy of life. It is true that we have seen that all these joys were illusions, and that their pursuit was more painful than pleasing, but Hartmann here makes an exception in favor of the delights which art and science procure, and also, like a true Berlinois, of those which the table affords.

"Wealth," he says, "makes me lord and master. With it I can purchase the pleasures of the table, and even those of love." It is unnecessary to contend with him on this point: our tastes all differ; still there are few, it is to be imagined, who will envy him in an affection which is purchasable with coin of the realm. Moreover, wealth does not make one lord and master; there is a certain charm in original and brilliant conversation which neither Hartmann nor any one else could buy, even though all the wealth of Ormus and the Ind stood to his credit on the ledgers of the Landesbank. Wealth, however, he hastens to explain, should be valued not for the commodities which it can procure, but rather because we are enabled therewith to shield ourselves from inconveniences which would otherwise disturb that zero of the sensibility which the pessimist holds to be

the nearest approach to reality in happiness.

It is said that the drowning man will clutch at a straw, and it is possible that the reader who has seen his illusions dispersed and slaughtered one by one has perhaps deluded himself with the fancy that hope at least might yet survive; if he has done so, he may be sure that he has reckoned without his host. Hartmann guillotines the blue goddess in the most off-hand manner; she is the last on the list, and he does the job with a hand which is, so to speak, well in. Of course hope is a great delight; who thinks of denying it? Certainly not the headsman, who even drops a sort of half tear over her mangled wings. But if we come to look over the warrant which has legalized the execution, the question naturally arises who and what is hope? It is of little use to ask the poets, for they are all astray; what they see in hope is a fair sky girt with laurels,—in other words, the rape of happiness; but has it not been repeated even to satiety that happiness does not exist, that pain outbalances pleasure? What is hope, then, but an illusion? and an illusion, too, that plays all manner of tricks with us, and amuses itself at our expense; one, in fact, which makes use of us until our task is accomplished, and we understand that all things are different from that which we desired. "He, then," Hartmann says, "who is once convinced that hope is as vain and illusory as its object will see its influence gradually wane beneath the power of the understanding, and the one thing to which he will then look forward will be, not the greatest amount of happiness, but the easiest burden of pain."

In all that has gone before, Hartmann has endeavored to show that suffering increases with the development of the intellect, or rather, that

happiness exists only in the mineral kingdom, which represents that zero of the senses above which man struggles in vain. It has been seen that they whose nervous systems are most impressionable have a larger share of suffering than their less sensitive brethren; furthermore, experience teaches that the lower classes are more contented than the cultivated and the rich, for while they are more exposed to want, yet they are thicker-skinned and more obtuse. In descending the scale of life, therefore, it is easy to show that such weight of pain as burdens animal existence is less than that which man supports. The horse, whose sensibility is most delicate, leads a more painful existence than the swine, or even the fish, whose happiness at high tide is proverbial. The life of the fish is happier than that of the horse, the oyster is happier than the fish, the life of the plant is happier yet, and so on down to the last degrees of organic life, where consciousness expires and suffering ends.

The balance sheet of human pleasure and pain may therefore be summed up somewhat as follows: in the first column stand those conditions which correspond to a state of pure indifference, and merely represent the absence of certain sufferings; these are health, youth, liberty, and well-being; in the second are those which stand as illusory incentives, such as the desire for wealth, power, esteem, and general regard; in the third are those which, as a rule, cause more pain than pleasure, such as hunger and love; in the fourth are those which rest on illusions, such as hope, etc.; in the fifth are those which, recognized as misfortunes, are only accepted to escape still greater ones: these are work and marriage; in the sixth are those which afford more pleasure than pain, but whose joys must be paid for by suffering, and in any

event can be shared but by the few: this is the column of art and science.

Let a line be drawn and the columns added up, the sum total amounts to the inevitable conclusion that pain is greatly in excess of pleasure; and this not alone in the average, but in the particular existence of each individual, and even in the case of him who seems exceptionally favored. Hartmann has taken great care to point out that experience demonstrates the vanity of each of the opulent aspirations of youth, and that on the subject of individual happiness intelligent old age preserves but few illusions.

Such is the schedule of pleasure and pain which each one is free to verify by his own experience, or, better still, to disregard altogether; for, from what has gone before, it is easy to see that man is most happy when he is the unconscious dupe of his own illusions. In Koheleth it is written: "To add to knowledge is to add to pain." He, then, whose judgment is obscured by illusions is less sensible to the undeniable miseries of life; he is always prepared to welcome hope, and each deception is forgotten in the expectation of better things. Mr. Micawber, whose acquaintance we have all made, is not alone a type, but a lesson, the moral of which is sometimes overlooked.

In brief, Hartmann's teaching resolves itself into the doctrine that the idea that happiness is obtainable in this life is the first and foremost of illusions. This conclusion, in spite of certain eccentricities of statement, is none the less one which will be found singularly difficult to refute. But every question has two different sides, and this one is no exception. The devil, whom Schopenhauer painted in a good grim

gray, Hartmann has daubed all over with a depth of black of which he is certainly undeserving; and not only that, but he has taken an evident pleasure in so doing. It is not, therefore, unfair to use his own weapon, and tell him that he, too, is the dupe of an illusion, or, to borrow a simile from the prince of wits, to insist that while he may not carry any unnecessary quantity of motes in his eye, some dust has assuredly settled on his monocle.

As is the case with others who have treated the subject, Hartmann confounds the value of the existence of the unit with the worth of life in the aggregate. Taken as a whole, it is undeniably and without doubt unfortunate, but that does not prevent many people from being superlatively, and, to the pessimist, even insultingly happy; and though the joy of a lifetime be circumscribed in a single second, yet it is not rash to say that that second of joy may be so vividly intense as to compensate its recipient for all miseries past and to come. It may be noted, further, that the balance-sheet which has just been reviewed is simply a resultant of Hartmann's individual opinion. Sometimes, it is true, he deals with unquestioned facts, and sometimes with unanswerable figures; but it has been wittily said that nothing is so fallacious as facts except figures; and certain of these figures and facts, which seem to bear out his statements, are found at times to be merely assertions, and exaggerated at that.

The second great illusion from which Hartmann would deliver us is the belief that happiness is realizable in a future life. As has been seen, he has already contended that earthly felicity is unobtainable, and his arguments against a higher state are, in a word, that unless the condition which

follows life is compared to the anterior state of being, chaos, the successor of life, can bring to man neither happiness nor unhappiness; but as the belief in the regeneration of the body is no longer tenable, it follows that this contrast cannot be appreciated by the non-existent, who are necessarily without thought or consciousness.

This doctrine, which is very nearly akin to Buddhism, has, of course, but little in common with Christianity. Christianity does not, it is true, recognize in us any fee simple to happiness, but it recommends the renunciation of such as may be held, that the value of the transcendent felicity which it promises may be heightened to a still greater extent. It was this regenerating hope, this association of a disdain for life to a promise of eternal well-being, that saved antiquity from the despair and distaste for life in which it was being slowly consumed. But, according to the tendency of modern thought, every effort to demonstrate the reality of ultramundane happiness only results in a more or less disguised and fantastic representation of Nirvâna, while the idea which each forms of such a condition varies naturally with the degree of his culture. It is certainly not at all astonishing that all those who are more or less attached to the Christian conception of life should, as Hartmann says, indignantly repulse any and every suggestion of this description. For such ideas to be accepted, a long and worldly civilizing preparation is needed.

A period of this nature is found in his analysis of the third and last great illusion, which holds that happiness will be realizable in the progressing evolution of the world. The chapter in which this subject is treated is one of the most masterly in his

entire work, and as such is well deserving of careful examination.

First, it may be explained that to the student of modern science the history of the world is that of a continuous and immense development. The union of photometry and spectral analysis enables him to follow the evolution of other planets, while chemistry and mineralogy teach him something of the earth's own story before it cooled its outer crust. Biology discloses the evolution of the vegetable and animal kingdom; archæology, with some assistance from other sources, throws an intelligible light over the prehistoric development of man, while history brings with it the reverberation of the ordered march of civilization, and points at the same time to larger and grander perspectives. It is not hard, then, to be convinced of the reality of progress; the difficulty lies in the inability to present it to one's self in a thoroughly unselfish manner. From an egoist point of view, man—and by man is meant he who has succeeded in divesting himself of the two illusions just considered—would condemn life not only as a useless possession, but as an affliction. He has, however, Hartmann tells him, a rôle to fill under the providential direction of the Unconscious, which, in conformity with the plan of absolute wisdom, draws the world on to a beneficent end, and this rôle exacts that he shall take interest in, and joyously sacrifice himself to life. If he does otherwise, his loss prevents no suffering to society, on the contrary, it augments the general discomfort by the length of time which is needed to replace a useful member. Man may not, then, as Schopenhauer recommended, assist as a passive spectator of life; on the contrary, he must ceaselessly act, work, and produce, and associate himself without regret in the economic and

intellectual development of society; or, in other words, he must lend his aid to the attainment of the supreme goal of the evolution of the universe, for that there is a goal it is as impossible to doubt as it is unreasonable to suppose that the world's one end and aim is to turn on its orbit and enjoy the varied spectacle of pain. And yet, what is this goal to which all nature tends? According to a theory which nowadays is very frequently expressed, it is the attainment of universal happiness through gradual advancement and progress.

But, whatever progress humanity may realize, it will never be able, Hartmann affirms, to do away with, nor yet diminish those most painful of evils, illness, old age, poverty, and discontent. So, no matter to how great an extent remedies may be multiplied, disorders, and especially those which are light but chronic, will spread with a progression far more rapid than the knowledge of therapeutics. The gayety of youth, moreover, will never be but the privilege of a fraction of mankind, while the greater part will continue to be devoured by the melancholy of old age. The poverty of the masses, too, as the world advances, becomes more and more formidable, for all the while the masses are gaining a clearer perception of their misery. The happiest races, it has been said over and over again, are those which live nearest to nature, as do the savage tribes; and after them come necessarily the civilized nations, which are the least cultivated. Historically speaking, therefore, the progress of civilization corresponds with the spread of general nausea.

May it not be, then, as Kant maintained, that the practice of universal morality is the great aim of evolution? Hartmann considers the question at great

length, and decides in the negative; for, were it such, it would necessarily expand with time, gain ground, so to speak, and take a firm hold on the different classes of society. These feats, of course, it has not performed, for immorality in descending the centuries has changed only in form. Indeed, putting aside the fluctuations of the character of every race, it will be found that everywhere the same connection is maintained between egotism and sympathy. If one is shocked at the cruelty and brutality of former days, it should nevertheless be remembered that uprightness, sincerity, and justice were the characteristics of earlier nations. Who shall say, however, that to-day we do not live in a reign of falsehood, perfidy, and the coarsest crimes; and that were it not for the assured execution of the repressive enactments of the state and society, we should see the naked brutality of the barbarians surge up again among us? For that matter, it may be noted that at times it does reappear in all its human bestiality, and invariably so the moment that law and order are in any way weakened or destroyed. What happened in the draft riots in New York, and in Paris under the Commune?

Since morality cannot be the great aim of evolution, perhaps it may be art and science; but the further back one looks, the more does scientific progress appear to be the exclusive work of certain rare and gifted minds, while the nearer one approaches the present epoch, the more collective does the work become. Hartmann points out that the first thinkers were not unlike the magicians who made a monument rise out of nothing, whereas the laborers who work at the intellectual edifice of the present day are but corporations of intelligent builders who each, according to their strength, aid in the

construction of a gigantic tower. "The work of science hereafter will," he says, "be broader and less profound; it will become exclusively inductive, and hence the demand for genius will grow gradually less. Similarity of dress has already blended the different ranks of society; meanwhile we are advancing to an analogous leveling of the intelligence, which will result in a common but solid mediocrity. The delight in scientific production will gradually wane, and the world will end in knowing only the pleasures of passive understanding. But the pleasure of knowledge is tasteless when truth is presented like a cake already prepared: to be enjoyed it must cost an effort and a struggle."

Art will be handicapped in much the same manner. It is no longer now what it was for the youth of humanity, a god august dispensing happiness with open hands; it is simply a matter of amusement, a remedy for ennui, and a distraction from the fatigues of the day. Hence the increase of dilettantism and the neglect of serious study. The future of art is to Hartmann self-evident. "Age has no ideal, or rather, it has lost what it had, and art is condemned in the increasing years of humanity to hold the same position as the nightly ballets and farces now do to the bankers and brokers of large cities."

This consistent treatment of the subject Hartmann cleverly founds on the analogy of the different ages of the life of the individual with the development of humanity. It is, of course, merely a series of affirmations, but not for that reason necessarily untrue. The great thinkers have disappeared, as have also the great artists; and they have done so, Hartmann would say, because we no longer need them. Indeed, there can be little doubt that could the

Greeks come back, they would tell us our art was barbarous; even to the casual observer it has retrograded, nor is it alone in painting and sculpture that symptoms of decadence are noticeable; if we look at the tendencies in literature, nothing very commendable is to be found, save in isolated instances, where the technicalities of style have been raised very near to perfection; but, apart from a few purists who can in no sense be called popular, the majority of the manufacturers of fiction have nothing to offer but froth and rubbish.

The modern stage, too, brings evidence that a palpitant tableau is more appreciated than a polished comedy, and the concert-hall tells a story which is not dissimilar. Music, which with Mozart changed its sex, has been turned into a harlot by Offenbach and his successors; and there are but few nowadays who would hesitate between Don Juan and the last inanity of Strauss. One composer, however, of incontestable genius, has been slowly fighting his way into the hearts of cultivated people, and, curiously enough, has sought to translate with an orchestra some part of the philosophy of pessimism. Schopenhauer, it is said, shook his head at Wagner, and would have none of him; yet if Schopenhauer was ever wrong, he was certainly wrong in that; for Wagner has expressed, as no one will do again, the flooding rush of Will, and the unspiritual but harmonious voice of Nature.

But whatever may become of art, science is not to be dismissed so abruptly. Practically considered, the political, social, and industrial advance of the world depends entirely on its progress; and yet, from Hartmann's standpoint, all that has been accomplished hitherto, by the aid of manufactories,

steamships, railways and telegraphs, has merely served to lessen the embarrassments which compressed the activity of man; and the sole advantage which society has reaped by their aid is that the force heretofore expended in actual labor is now free for the play of the intellect, and serves to hasten the evolution of the world. This result, Hartmann remarks, while of importance to general progress, in no wise affects the happiness of the individual.

This last statement of his will perhaps be better understood if it be taken into consideration that the increased production of food which will necessarily follow on a more intelligent culture of the soil will greatly augment the population. An increase of population will multiply the number of those who are always on the verge of starvation, of which there are already millions. But an advance of this kind, while a step backward one way, must yet be a step forward in another; for the wealth which it will bring in its train will necessarily aid in diminishing suffering.

Politically considered, the outlook does not seem to be much more assured. An ideal government can do nothing more than permit man to live without fear of unjust aggressions, and enable him to prepare the ground on which he may construct, if he can, the edifice of his own happiness. Socially, the result will be about the same: through solidarity, association, and other means, men will learn how to make the struggle of the individual with want less severe; yet, in all this, his burdens will be merely lightened, and positive happiness will remain unobtained.

Such are the outlines of Hartmann's conception of

what future progress will amount to. If the ideal is realized, man will be gradually raised out of the misery in which he is plunged, and little by little approach a state of indifference in every sphere of his activity. But it should be remembered that the ideal is ever intangible; man may approach, but he can never reach it, and consequently will remain always in a state of suffering.

In this manner, but with a profusion of argument, which, if not always convincing, is yet highly instructive, Hartmann has shown in brief that the people that dwell nearest to nature are happier than the civilized nations, that the poor are more contented than the rich, the poor in spirit more blessed than the intelligent, and that in general that man is the happiest whose sensibilities are the most obtuse, because pleasure is then less dominated by pain, and illusions are more steadfast and complete; moreover, that the progress of humanity develops not only wealth and its needs, and consequently discontent, but also the aptitudes and culture of the intellect, which in turn awaken man to the consciousness of the misery of life, and in so doing heighten the sentiment of general misfortune.

The dream that another golden age is to visit the earth is, therefore, puerile in the extreme. As the wayfarer's burden grows heavier with the miles, so do humanity's suffering and the consciousness of its misery continually increase. The child lives in the moment, the adolescent dreams of a transcendent ideal; man aspires to glory, then to wealth or practical wisdom; lastly, old age, recognizing the vanity of all things, holds but to peace, and bends a tired head to rest. "And so it is with civilization,—nations rise, strengthen, and disappear. Humanity,

by unmistakable signs, shows that it is on the wane, and that having employed its strength in maturity, age is now overtaking it. In time it will be content to live on the accumulated wisdom of the centuries, and, inured to thought, it will review the collective agitations of its past life, and recognize the vanity of the goal hitherto pursued.... Humanity, in its decline, will leave no heir to profit by its accumulated wealth. It will have neither children nor grandchildren to trouble the rigor of its judgment through the illusions of parental love. It will sink finally into that melancholy which is the appanage of great minds; it will in a measure float above its own body like a spirit freed from matter; or, as Œdipus at Colonna, it will in anticipation taste the calm of chaos, and assist with compassionate self-pity at the spectacle of its own suffering. Passions that have vanished into the depths of reason will be resolved into ideas by the white light of thought. Illusions will have faded and hope be done with, for what is there left to hope? Its highest aim can be but the absence of pain, for it can no longer dream of happiness; still weak and fragile, working to live, and yet not knowing why it does so, it will ask but one gift, the rest of an endless sleep that shall calm its weariness and immense ennui. It is then that humanity will have passed through the three periods of illusion, and in recognizing the nothingness of its former hopes will aspire only to absolute insensibility and the chaos of Nirvâna."

It remains but to inquire what is to become of disillusionized humanity, and to what goal evolution is tending. The foregoing account of Hartmann's theory should have shown that this goal cannot be happiness, for at no period has it ever been reached, and, moreover, that with the progress of the world

man is gaining a clearer perception of his misery. On the other hand, it would be illogical to suppose that evolution is to continue with no other aim than that of the discharge of the successive moments that compose it; for if each of these moments is valueless, evolution itself would be meaningless; but Hartmann, it may be remembered, has recognized in the Unconscious a principle of absolute wisdom, and the answer must be looked for elsewhere, but preferably in that direction which most noticeably points to some determined and progressive perfection. No such sign, however, is to be met with anywhere save in the development of consciousness; here progress has been clearly and uninterruptedly at work, from the appearance of the first globule to contemporaneous humanity, and in all probability will continue to advance so long as the world subsists. All things aid in its production and development, while to its assistance there come not only the perfecting of the nervous system, but also such personal incentives as the desire for wealth, which in increasing general welfare disfranchises the intellect; then, too, there are the stimulants to intellectual activity, vanity and ambition, and also sexual love, which heightens its aptitudes; in short, every instinct which is valuable to the species, and which costs the individual more pain than pleasure, is converted into an unalloyed and increasing gain for consciousness.

In spite of all this, however, the development of consciousness is but the means to an end, and cannot therefore be considered as an absolute goal; "for consciousness," Hartmann says, "is born of pain, and exists and expands with suffering, and yet what manner of consolation does it offer? Merely a vain self-mirroring. Of course, if the world were good and

beautiful, this would not be without its advantage; but a world which is absolutely miserable, a world which must curse its own existence the moment it is able to judge it, can never regard its apparent and purely ideal reflection as a reasonable goal and termination of its existence. Is there not suffering enough in reality? Is it necessary to reproduce it in a magic lantern? No; consciousness cannot be the supreme goal of a world whose evolution is directed by supreme wisdom.... Some other end must be sought for, then, to which the development of consciousness shall be but the means."

But, however the question is regarded, from whatever standpoint the matter is viewed, there seems to be but one possible goal, and that is happiness. Everything that exists tends thereto, and it is the principle on which rests each of the diverse forms of practical philosophy; moreover, the pursuit of happiness is the essence of Will seeking its own pacification. But happiness has been shown to be an illusion; still there must be some key to the riddle. The solution is at once simple and unexpected. There can be no positive happiness, and yet happiness of some kind is necessary; the supreme aim of universal progress, of which consciousness is but the instrument, is then the realization of the highest possible felicity, which is nothing else than the freedom from all pain, and, in consequence, the cessation of all life; or, in other words, total annihilation.

This climax is the only one which Hartmann will consent to consider; from any other point of view evolution would be a tireless *progressus* which some day might be blindly arrested by chance, while life in

the mean time would remain in the utter desolation of an issueless purgatory.

The path, however, through which the great deliverance is to be effected is as tortuously perplexing as the irrational duality of the Unconscious. Many generations of pessimists are needed before the world will be fully ripe for its great leap into the night of time; even then, though Hartmann does not appear to suspect it, there will probably be quite a number of pantheists who, drunk on Nature, will stupidly refuse the great bare bodkin, which will have thus been carefully prepared for their viaticum.

It should not be supposed that in all this there is any question of the suicide of the individual: Hartmann is far too dramatic to suggest a final tableau so tame and humdrum as that; besides, it has been seen that the death of the individual does not drag with it the disappearance of the species, and in no wise disturbs the heedless calm of Nature. It is not the momentary and ephemeral existence that is to be destroyed, for, after its destruction, the repairing and reproducing force would still survive; it is the principle of existence itself which must be extinguished; the suicide, to be effectual, must be that of the cosmos. This proceeding, which will shortly be explained, "will be the act of the last moment, after which there will be neither will nor activity; after which, to quote Saint John, 'time will have ceased to be.'"

But here it may be pertinently asked whether humanity, such as it now is, will be capable of this grandiose development of consciousness which is to prepare the absolute renunciation of the will to live, or whether some superior race is to appear on earth

which will continue the work and attain the goal. May it not be that the globe will be but the theatre of an abortive effort of this description, and long after it has gone to increase the number of frozen spheres, some other planet, which is to us invisible, may, under more favorable circumstances, realize the self-same aim and end? To this the answer is made that if humanity is ever destined to conduct the world's evolution to its coronation, it will assuredly not complete its task until the culminating point of its progress has been reached, nor yet until it has united the most favorable conditions of existence. We need not, however, bother about the perspective which science has disclosed, and which points to a future period of congelation and complete inertia; long before that time, Hartmann says, evolution will have ended, and this world of ours, with its continents and archipelagoes, will have vanished.

The manner in which this great and final annihilation is to be accomplished is of a threefold nature; the first condition necessary to success is that humanity at some future time shall concentrate such a mass of Will that the balance, spread about elsewhere over the world, will be insignificant in proportion. This, Hartmann explains, is in no wise impossible, "for the manifestation of Will in atomic forces is greatly inferior to that which is exercised in the vegetable and animal kingdom, and hence much less than that which irrupts in man. The supposition, therefore, that the greater part may be capitalized in man is not necessarily an idle dream. When that day arrives, it will suffice for humanity to no longer will to live to annihilate the entire fabric; for humanity will at that time represent more Will than all the rest of Nature collectively considered."

The second condition necessary to success is that mankind shall be so thoroughly alive to the folly of life, so imperiously in need of peace, and shall have so completely disentangled every effort from its aimlessness, that the yearning for an end to existence will be the prime motive of every act. A condition such as this, Hartmann thinks, will probably be realized in the old age of humanity. The theory that life is an evil is already admitted by thinkers; the supposition, therefore, that it may some day triumph over the prejudices of the multitude is neither absurd nor preposterous. As is shown in the history of other creeds, an idea may penetrate so deeply into the minds of its adherents as to breed an entire race of fanatics; and it is the opinion, not of Hartmann alone, but of many serious and cultivated scholars, that if ever an idea was destined to triumph without recourse to either passion or violence, and to exercise at the same time an action purely pacific, yet so profound and durable as to assure its success beforehand, that idea, or rather that sentiment, is the compassion which the pessimist feels not only for himself, but for everything that is. Its gradual adoption these gentlemen consider not as problematical, but merely as a question of time. Indeed, the difficulty is not so great as might be supposed; every day the will of the individual suffices to triumph over the instinctive love of life, and, Hartmann logically argues, may not the mass of humanity do the same thing? The denial of the will to live on the part of the individual is, it is true, barren of any benefit to the species, but, on the other hand, a universal denial would result in complete deliverance.

Mankind, however, has yet a long journey before it, and many generations are needed to overcome, and

to dissipate little by little, through the influence of heredity, those passions which are opposed to the desire for eternal peace. In time, Hartmann thinks, all this will be brought about; and he holds, moreover, that the development of consciousness will correspond with the weakening of passion, which is to be one of the characteristics of the decline of humanity, as it is now one of the signs of the day.

The third condition necessary for the perfect consummation of this gigantic suicide is that communication between the inhabitants of the world be so facilitated that they may simultaneously execute a common resolution. Full play is allowed the imagination in picturing the manner in which all this is to be accomplished. Hartmann has a contempt for details, and contents himself with asserting that it is necessary and possible, and that in the abdication of humanity every form of existence will cease.

Such, in brief, is this vehement conception of the ordering of the world, and the plan for its precipitate destruction. With a soldierly disregard of objection, but with a prodigality of argument and digression which, if not always substantial, is unusually vivid, Hartmann explains the Unconscious and its reacting dualism of Will and Idea. One principle is, as has been seen, constantly irrupting into life, and it is through the revolt of the second that the first is to be thwarted and extinguished. Nothing, indeed, could be more simple; and it would be a graceless and pedantic task to laboriously clamber to the same vague altitudes to which Hartmann has so lightly soared, and there contradict his description of the perspective.

To any one who has cared to follow the writer thus far, the outlines given of Hartmann's conspiracy against pain must have seemed aggressively novel. Schopenhauer's ideas on the same subject were seemingly more practical, if less lurid, but then Schopenhauer hugged a fact and flouted chimeras. It may be that Schopenhauer was a little behind the age, for Hartmann has criticised him very much as a collegian on a holiday might jeer at the old-world manners of his grandfather. As they cannot both be right, each may be wrong; and it may be that the key to the whole great puzzle is contained in that one word, resignation, which the poet-philosopher pronounced so long ago. As a remedy this certainly has the advantage of being a more immediate and serviceable palliative to the sufferer than either of those suggested in the foregoing systems. It is admitted that—

"Man cannot feed and be fed on the faith
of to-morrow's baked meat;"

and it is in the same manner difficult for any one to hypnotize himself and his suffering with the assurance that in the decline of humanity all pain will cease; on the other hand, whether we have in regard to future generations an after-me-the-deluge feeling, and practically care very little whether or no they annihilate themselves and pain too, still the more intelligent will readily recognize the ubiquity of sorrow, and consider resignation at present as its most available salve.

But in spite of its vagaries, pessimism, as expounded by Schopenhauer and Hartmann, possesses a real and enduring value which it is difficult to talk away; it is naturally most easy to laugh, in the heyday of youth and health, at its fantastic misanthropy; indeed, it is in no sense perfect; it has halted and tripped many times; it has points that even to the haphazard and indifferent spectator are weak and faulty, and yet what creed is logically perfect, and what creed is impregnable to criticism? That there is none such can be truly admitted. The reader, then, may well afford to be a little patient with pessimism; theoretically, it is still in its infancy, but with increasing years its blunders will give way to strength; and though many of the theories that it now holds may alter, the cardinal, uncontrovertible tenet that life is a burden will remain firm and changeless to the end of time.

CHAPTER VI.

IS LIFE AN AFFLICTION?

In very stately words, that were typical of him who uttered them, Emerson said, "I do not wish to be amused;" and turned therewith a figurative back on the enticements of the commonplace.

Broadly speaking, the sentiment that prompted this expression is common to all individual men. The so-called allurements and charms of the world are attractive to the vulgar, but not to the thinker, and whether the thinker be a Trappist or a comedian, he will, if called to account, express himself in a manner equally frank.

For sentiments of this description neither orthodoxy nor pessimism is to blame. They are merely the resultants of the obvious and the true; they leap into being in every intelligent mind. The holiday crowd on its way to the Derby, to Coney Island, the Lido, or to any one of the other thousand places of popular resort, causes even the ordinary observer to wonder why it is that he cannot go too, and enjoy himself with the same boisterous good humor which palpitates all about him; he thinks at first that he has some fibre lacking, some incapacity for that enjoyment which has in so large a measure been given to others; but little by little the conviction breaks upon him that he has a fibre more, and that it is the others who lack the finer perceptions with which he is burdened.

That the others are to be envied, and he to be pitied,

there can be no manner of doubt, but all the same the fact that he is unable to take part in popular amusements steadfastly remains; and while the matter of the extra fibre is more or less reassuring, it is not always perfectly satisfactory, and he then begins to look about for the reason. If to his power of observation there be added also a receptive mind and an introspective eye, it will be unnecessary for him to have ever heard of M. Renan to become gradually aware that he is the victim of a gigantic swindle. In common with many others, he has somehow imagined that the world was a broad and fertile plain, with here and there a barren tract. It is impossible for him to give any reason for this fancy; "In the world ye shall have tribulation," is the explicit warning of the Founder of Christianity, and to this warning all creeds, save that of the early Hellenists, concur. It did not, therefore, come from any religious teaching, nor, for that matter, from any philosophy. Still the impression, however vague it may seem when analyzed, has none the less been with him, as with all others, the reason being simply that he grew up with it as he may have grown up with fairy tales, and it is not until his aspirations stumble over facts that he begins to see that life, instead of being the pleasant land flowing with milk and honey, which he had imagined, is in reality something entirely different.

These deductions, of course, need not follow because a man finds that he is more or less indifferent to every form of entertainment, from a king's revel to a walking-match; but they may follow of any man who has begun to dislike the propinquity of the average, and to feel that where the crowd find amusement there will be nothing but weariness and vexation of spirit for him. Under such circumstances he is an

instinctive pessimist, and one who needs but little theoretic instruction to learn that he, as all others, has been made use of, and cheated to boot. The others, it is true, are, generally speaking, unaware of the deception that has been practiced on them; they have, it may be, a few faint suspicions that something has gone wrong somewhere, but even in uttermost depression the untutored look upon their misfortunes as purely individual, and unshared by the world at large. Of the universality of suffering, of the fact, as John Stuart Mill has put it, that there is no happiness for nineteen twentieths of the world's inhabitants, few have any conception or idea. They look, it may be, over their garden wall, and, hearing their neighbor grumble, they think that, being cross-grained and ill-tempered, his life is not one of unalloyed delight. But their vision extends no further. They do not see the sorrow that has no words, nor do they hear the silent knell of irrecoverable though unuttered hopes, "the toil of heart, and knees, and hands." Of all these things they know nothing; household worries, and those of their neighbor and his wife, circle their existence. If they are not contented themselves, then happiness is but a question of distance. Another street, or another town, or another country holds it, and if the change is made, the old story remains to be repeated.

There are those, too, who from dyspepsia, torpidity of the liver, or general crankiness of disposition, are inclined to take a gloomy view of all things; then there is a temperamental pessimism which displays itself in outbursts of indignation against the sorrows of life, and in frantic struggles with destiny and the meshes of personal existence; there is also the sullen pessimism of despair noticeable in the quiet folding of hands, and which with tearless eyes awaits death

without complaint; then there are those who complain and sulk, who torment themselves and others, and who have neither the spunk to struggle nor the grace to be resigned,—this is the "*forme miserable*;" there is also a haphazard pessimism which comes of an unevenness of disposition, and which asserts itself on a rainy day, or when stocks are down; another is the accidental type, the man who, with loss of wife, child, or mistress, settles himself in a dreary misanthropy; finally, there is hypochondria, which belongs solely to pathology.

In none of these categories do the victims have any suspicion that a philosophical significance is attached to their suffering. Curiously enough, however, it is from one or from all of these different classes that the ordinary acceptation of pessimism is derived; it is these forms that are met with in every-day life and literature, and yet it is precisely with these types, that spring from the disposition and temperament of the individual who exhibits them, that scientific pessimism has nothing to do. It ignores them entirely.

Broadly stated, scientific pessimism in its most advanced form rests on a denial that happiness in any form ever has been or ever will be obtained, either by the individual as a unit or by the world as a whole; and this for the reason that life is not considered as a pleasant gift made to us for our pleasure; on the contrary, it is a duty which must be performed by sheer force of labor,—a task which in greater matters, as in small, brings in its train a misery which is general, an effort which is ceaseless, and a tension of mind and body which is extreme, and often unbearable. Work, torment, pain, and

misery are held to be the unavoidable lot of nearly every one, and the work, torment, pain, and misery of life are considered as necessary to mankind as the keel to the ship. Indeed, were it otherwise, were wishes, when formed, fulfilled, in what manner would the time be employed? Imagine the earth to be a fairyland where all grows of itself, where birds fly roasted to the spit, and where each would find his heart's best love wreathed with orange flowers to greet his coming; what would the result be? Some would bore themselves to death, some would cut their throats, while others would quarrel, assassinate, and cause generally more suffering than is in the present state of affairs actually imposed upon them. Pain is not the accident, but the necessary and inevitable concomitant of life; and the attractiveness of the promise "that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," is, in consequence, somewhat impaired.

Nor, according to scientific pessimism, is there any possibility that happiness will be obtained in a future life. In this there is no atheism, though the arguments that follow may seem to savor of the agnostic.

As has been seen, pleasures are, as a rule, indirect, being cessations or alleviations of pain. If it be taken for granted that in a future life there will be no pain, the difficulty is not overcome, but rather increased by the fact of the rapid exhaustion of nervous susceptibility to pleasure. Furthermore, as without brain there is no consciousness, it will not be illogical to suppose that every spirit must be provided with such an apparatus; in which case the psychological laws in the other life must be strictly analogous to those of early experience. The

deduction follows of itself,—there, too, must be pain and sorrow.

To this it may be objected that in a future life there need be no question either of pain or pleasure, and that the ransomed soul will, in contemplation, or love, or the practice of morality, be too refined to be susceptible to any sensations of a grosser nature.

To all this advanced pessimism has a ready answer: first, there can be no morality, for where there is no body and no property it is impossible to injure another; second, there can be no love, for every form of love, from the highest to the lowest, rests on the basis of sensibility; when, therefore, after the abstraction of shape, voice, features, and all bodily actions that are manifested through the medium of the brain, nothing but an unsubstantial shadow remains, what is there left to love? third, there can be no contemplation, for in a state of clairvoyance contemplation is certainly useless.

In these arguments pessimism, it may be noted, does not deny the possibility of future existence; it denies merely the possibility of future happiness; and its logic, of course, can in no wise affect the position of those who hold that man is unable to conceive or imagine anything of that which is, or is not to be.

From a religious standpoint advanced pessimism teaches that the misery of life is immedicable, and strips away every illusion with which it has been hitherto enveloped; it offers, it is true, no hope that a future felicity will be the recompense of present suffering, and if in this way it ignores any question of reward and punishment, it does not for that reason necessarily open a gate to license and immorality; on

the contrary, pessimism stands firmly to the first principle of the best ethics, and holds that men shall do good without the wish to be rewarded, and abstain from evil without the fear of being punished.

In regard to what follows death, it recognizes in the individual but the aspiration to be liberated from the task of coöperating in evolution, the desire to be replunged in the Universal Spirit, and the wish to disappear therein as the raindrop disappears in the ocean, or as the flame of the lamp is extinguished in the wind. In other words, it does not aim at mere happiness, but at peace and at rest; and meanwhile, until the hour of deliverance is at hand, it does not acquit the individual of any of the obligations that he owes to society, nor of one that is due to himself. In short, the creed as it stands is one of charity and good-will to all men; and, apart from its denial of future happiness, it does not in its ethics differ in any respect from the sublime teachings of the Christian faith.

It seems trite to say that we are passing through a transition period, for all things seem to point to a coming change; still, whatever alterations time may bring in its train, it is difficult to affirm that the belief here set forth is to be the religion of the future, *n'est pas prophète qui veut*; in any event, it is easy to prove that pessimism is not a religion of the past. Its very youth militates most against it; and while it may outgrow this defect, yet it has other objectionable features which to the average mind are equally unassuring: to begin with it is essentially iconoclastic; wherever it rears its head, it does so amid a swirl of vanishing illusions and a totter and crash of superstition. There are few, however, that part placidly with these possessions; illusions are

relinquished grudgingly, and as for superstitions,—a wise man has said, Are they not hopes? It would seem, then, that in showing the futility of any quest of happiness here or hereafter, this doctrine, if received at all, will have performed a very thankless task. Indeed, it is this reason, if no other, that will cause it for some time to come to be regarded with distrust and dislike. The masses are conservative, and their conservatism usually holds them one or two centuries in arrears of advancing thought; and even putting the masses out of the question, one has to be very hospitable to receive truth at all times as a welcome guest, for truth is certainly very naked and uncompromising; we love to sigh for it, Béranger said, and, it may be added, most of us stop there.

Pessimism, moreover, seemingly takes, and gives nothing in return; but if it is examined more closely it will be found that its very melancholy transforms itself into a consolation which, if relatively restricted, is none the less valuable. Taubert, one of its most vigorous expounders, says, "Not only does it carry the imagination far beyond the actual suffering to which every one is condemned, and in this manner shield us from manifold deceptions, but it even increases such pleasures as life still holds, and doubles their intensity. For pessimism, while showing that each joy is an illusion, leaves pleasure where it found it, and simply incloses it in a black border, from which, in greater relief, it shines more brightly than before."

Another objection which has been advanced against pessimism is that it is a creed of quietist inactivity. Such, however, it can no longer be considered; for if it be viewed in the light of its recent developments, it will be found to be above all other beliefs the one

most directly interested in the progress of evolution. Pessimism, it may be remembered, came into general notice not more than twenty-five years ago; at that time it aroused in certain quarters a horrified dislike, in others it was welcomed with passionate approval; books and articles were written for and against it in much the same manner that books and articles leaped into print in defense and abuse of the theory generally connected with Darwin's name. Since then the tumult has gradually calmed down; on the one hand pessimism is accepted as a fact; on the other new expositors, less dogmatic than their great predecessor, and with an equipment of a quarter of a century's advance in knowledge, prune the original doctrine, and strengthen it with fresh and vigorous thought. Among these, and directly after Hartmann, Taubert takes the highest rank. This writer recognizes the truth of Schopenhauer's theory that progress brings with it a clearer consciousness of the misery of existence and the illusion of happiness, but at the same time much emphasis is laid on the possibility of triumphing over this misery through a subjugation of the selfish propensities. It is in this way, Taubert considers, that peace may be attained, or at least the burden of life noticeably diminished.

The bleakness in which Hartmann lodged the Unconscious is through this treatment rendered, if not comfortable, at least inhabitable. But while in this manner Taubert plays the upholsterer, another exponent wanders through the shadowy terraces of thought, and in so doing looks about him with the grim suavity of a sheriff seeking a convenient spot on which to clap a bill of sale. This writer, Julius Bahnsen, is best known through his "Philosophy of History,"[10] and a recent publication, "The Tragic as the World's First Law," whose repulsively attractive

title sent a fresh ripple eddying through the seas of literature. In these works the extreme of pessimism may be said to have been reached, for not only does their author vie with Schopenhauer in representing the world as a ceaseless torment which the Absolute has imposed on itself, but he goes a step further, and in denying that there is any finality even immanent in Nature, asserts that the order of phenomena is utterly illogical. It may be remembered that the one pure delight which Schopenhauer admitted was that of intellectual contemplation:—

> "That blessed mood,
> In which the burden of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world
> Is lightened."

But from Bahnsen's standpoint, inasmuch as the universe is totally lacking in order or harmonious design, since it is but the dim cavernous abode of unrelated phenomena and forms, the pleasure which Schopenhauer admitted, so far from causing enjoyment, is simply a source of anguish to the intelligent and reflective mind. Even the hope of final annihilation, which Schopenhauer suggested and Hartmann planned, has brought to him but cold comfort. He puts it aside as a pleasant and idle dream. To him the misery of the world is permanent and unalterable, and the universe nothing but Will rending itself in eternal self-partition and unending torment.

Beyond this it is difficult to go; few have cared to go even so far, and the bravado and vagaries of this doctrine have not been such as to cause anything more than a success of curiosity. Indeed, Bahnsen's

views have been mentioned here simply as being a part of the history, though not of the development of advanced pessimism, and they may now very properly be relegated to the night to which they belong.

To sum up, then, what has gone before, the modern pessimist is a Buddhist who has strayed from the Orient, and who in his exodus has left behind him all his fantastic shackles, and has brought with him, together with ethical laws, only the cardinal tenet, "Life is evil." Broadly considered, the difference between the two creeds is not important. The Buddhist aspires to a universal nothingness, and the pessimist to the moment when in the face of Nature he may cry:—

> "Oh! quelle immense joie, après tant de
> souffrance!
> À travers les débris, par-dessus les
> charniers,
> Pouvoir enfin jeter ce cri de délivrance—
> 'Plus d'hommes sous le ciel! Nous
> sommes les derniers!'"

Beyond this difference, the main principles of the two beliefs vary only with the longitude. The old, yet still infant East demands a fable, to which the young yet practical West turns an inattentive ear. Eliminate palingenesis, and the steps by which Nirvâna is attained, and the two creeds are to all intents and purposes precisely the same.

Of the two, Buddhism is, of course, the stronger; it appeals more to the imagination and less to facts; indeed, numerically speaking, its strength is greater than that of any other belief. According to the most

recent statistics the world holds about 8,000,000 Jews, 100,000,000 Mohammedans, 130,000,000 Brahmins, 370,000,000 Christians, and 480,000,000 Buddhists, the remainder being pagans, positivists, agnostics and atheists. Within the last few years Buddhism has spread into Russia, and from there into Germany, England, and the United States, and wherever it spreads it paves in its passing the way for pessimism. The number of pessimists it is of course impossible to compute: instinctive pessimists abound everywhere, but however limited the number of theoretic pessimists may be, their literature at least is daily increasing. For the last twenty years, it may safely be said that not a month has gone by unmarked by some fresh contribution; and the most recent developments of French and German literature show that the countless arguments, pleas, and replies which the subject has called forth have brought, instead of exhaustion, a new and expanded vigor.

The most violent opposition that pessimism has had to face has come, curiously enough, from the Socialists. For the Socialists, while pessimists as to the present, have optimistic views for the future. Their cry is not against the misery of the world, but against the capital that produces it. The artisan, they say, is smothered by the produce of his own hands: the more he produces, the more he increases the capital that is choking him down. In time, Marx says, there will exist only a few magnates face to face with a huge enslaved population; and as wealth increases in geometric proportion so will poverty, and with it the exasperation of the multitude. Then the explosion is to come, and Socialism to begin its sway. Now Socialism does not, as is generally supposed, preach community of goods; it preaches simply community of profits, and the abolition of capital as

a productive agent. When the explosion comes, therefore, the Socialists propose to turn the state into one vast and comprehensive guild, to which all productive capital, land, and factories shall appertain. The right of inheritance of personal property, it may be noted, will be retained; and this for a variety of reasons, of which the most satisfactory seems to be that such a right serves as an incentive to economy and activity. Money may be saved and descend, but it is not to be allowed the power of generation.

It will be readily understood, even from this brief summary, that such a doctrine as Hartmann's, which is chiefly concerned in disproving the value of every aspect of progress, was certain to call out many replies from those who see a vast area for the expansion of human comfort and happiness in the future developments of social life.

To these replies the pessimists have but one rejoinder, and that is that any hope of the expansion of happiness is an illusion. And is it an illusion? Simple Mrs. Winthrop said, "If us as knows so little can see a bit o' good and rights, we may be sure as there's a good and a rights better nor what we knows of." But then Mrs. Winthrop was admittedly simple, and her views in consequence are hardly those of the seer. From an endæmonist standpoint, the world does not seem to be much better off now than it was two or three thousand years ago; there are even some who think it has retrograded, and who turn to the civilization of Greece and Rome with longing regret; and this, notwithstanding the fact that from the peace and splendor of these nations cries of distress have descended to us which are fully as acute as any that have been uttered in recent years.

Truly, to the student of history each epoch brings its own shudder. There have been ameliorations in one way and pacifications in another, but misery looms in tireless constancy through it all. Each year a fresh discovery seems to point to still better things in the future, but progress is as undeniably the chimera of the present century as the resurrection of the dead was that of the tenth; each age has its own, for no matter to what degree of perfection industry may arrive, and to whatever heights progress may ascend, it must yet touch some final goal, and meanwhile pessimism holds that with expanding intelligence there will come, little by little, the fixed and immutable knowledge that of all perfect things which the earth contains misery is the most complete.

To question whether life is an affliction seems, from the facts and arguments already presented, to be somewhat unnecessary. The answer appears in a measure to be a foregone conclusion. Yet, if the question be examined without bias and without prejudice the issue is not only doubtful, but difficult to ascertain. If in any intelligent community the matter were put to vote by acclamation, the decision would undoubtedly be in the negative; and that for a variety of reasons, first and foremost of which is that ninety and nine out of a hundred persons are led by the thread of external appearance, and whatever their private beliefs may be, they still wish their neighbors to think that they at least have no cause to complain.

It is this desire to appear well in the eyes of others that makes what is termed the shabby-genteel, and which prevents so many proud yet vulgar minds from avowing their true position. Indeed, there are

few who, save to an intimate, have the courage to acknowledge that they are miserable; there is at work within them the same instinct that compels the wounded animal to seek the depths of the bushes in which to die. People generally are ashamed of grief, and turn to hide a tear as the sensitive turn from an accident in the street, and veil their eyes from deformity. Moreover, it is largely customary to mock at the melancholy; and in good society it is an unwritten law that every one shall bring a certain quota of contentment and gayety, or else remain in chambered solitude.

Added to this, and beyond the insatiable desire to appear serene and successful in the eyes of others, there is the terrible dread of seeming to be cheated and outwitted of that which is apparently a universal birthright; and, according to a general conception, there is the same sort of moral baseness evidenced in an unuttered yet visible appeal for sympathy, as that which is at work in the beggar's outstretched palm. Many, it is true, there are who drop the furtive coin, but the world at large passes with averted stare. "There is work for all," is a common saying, and for the infirm there are hospitals and institutions; "What, then, is the use of giving?" it is queried, and the answer follows, "They who ask for alms are frauds." If the alms be taken to stand for sympathy, the frauds will be found to be few and far between; for, if each man and woman who has arrived at the age of reason, at that age, in fact, which is not such as is set by the statute, but which each individual case makes for itself; if each one should have his heart first wrung dry and then dissected, there would be such an expanse and prodigality of sorrow discovered as would defy an index and put a library to shame.

If the tendency of current literature is examined, it will be found to point very nearly the same way. In earlier days the novel ended with the union of two young people, and the curtain fell on a tableau of awaited happiness. Nowadays, however, as the French phrase goes, we have changed all that. Realistic fiction is a picture of life as it is, and not, as was formerly the case, a picture of life as we want it. Probably the strongest and most typical romance of recent American authors is "The Portrait of a Lady;" and this picture of a thoroughbred girl, awake to the highest possibilities of life, ends not only in her entire disenchantment, but also, if I have understood Mr. James aright, in her utter degradation. In that very elaborate novel, "Daniel Deronda," the moral drawn is not dissimilar, and yet its author stood at the head of English fiction.

In French literature, the same influence is even more noticeably at work. It is the fashion to abuse Zola, and to say that his works are obscene; so they are, and so is the life that he depicts, but his descriptions are true to the letter; and the gaunt and wanton misery which he described in "l'Assommoir" is not, to my thinking, such as one need blush over, but rather such as might well cause tears. The work which those princes of literature, the Goncourts and Daudet, have performed, has been prepared, as one may say, with pens pricked in sorrow. "Germanie Lacerteux," "la Fille Eliza," "Chérie," "Jack," the "Nabab," and the "Évangéliste," are but one long-drawn-out cry of variegated yet self-same agony. In this respect Tourguénieff was well up to the age, as is also Spielhagen, who is very generally considered to be the best of German novelists.

The splendid wickedness of mediæval Italy has done

little to inspire her modern authors. The romances most abundant there are cheap translations from the French. De Amicis, the most popular native writer, and one whose name is familiar to every one as a traveler in Gautier's footsteps, has written but few stories, of which the best, however, "Manuel Menendez," is the incarnation of the soul of tragedy. [11]

Less recently, Stendhal, Balzac and Flaubert have harped the same note of accentuated despair; Musset has sung songs that would make a statue weep, and Baudelaire seems to have supped sorrow with a long spoon. In brief, the testimony of all purely modern writers amounts pretty much to the same thing; life to them seems an affliction.

This, of course, it may do without altering its value to others; let any one, for instance, go to a well-nurtured and refined girl of eighteen and tell her that life is an affliction, and she will look upon her informant as a retailer of trumpery paradox. And at eighteen what a festival is life! To one splendid in beauty and rich in hope how magnificent it all seems; what unexplored yet inviting countries extend about the horizon! winter is a kiss that tingles, and summer a warm caress; everything, even to death, holds its promise. And then picture her as she will be at eighty, without an illusion left, and turning her tired eyes each way in search of rest.

Life is not an affliction to those who are, and who can remain young; there are some who, without any waters of youth, remain so until age has sapped the foundation of their being; and it is from such as they that the greatest cheer is obtained. But to those who live, so to speak, in the thick of the fight, who see hope after hope fall with a crash, and illusion after

illusion vanish into still air; to the intelligent, to the observer, and especially to him who is forced against his will to struggle in the van, life is an affliction, a mishap, a calamity, and sometimes a curse.

That there are many such is proven by the statistics which the daily papers afford; and could one play Asmodeus, and look into the secret lives of all men, the evidence obtainable would in its baldness seem hideously undesirable. The degrees of sensitiveness, however, and the ability or inability to support suffering, vary admittedly with the individual. There are men who rise from an insult refreshed; there are many to whom an injury is a tonic and pain a stimulant; and there is even a greater number whose sensibilities are so dull that what is torture to another is barely a twinge to them.

It was the melancholy privilege of the writer to assist, a short time since, at an operation performed in a German hospital. A common soldier had been thrown from a horse with such force that his elbow was dislocated; in the *Klinik* he put his uninjured arm around a post, and then let the surgeon pull on a strap which had been fastened to the other, until the joint was once more in position. His arm was then bandaged, and he was told to return in a fortnight. On his second visit the bandage was removed, and the surgeon, after a violent effort, moved the stiffened joint backwards and forwards. During both operations, the only noticeable evidence of pain was a slight contraction of the upper lip, while the general expression of his face was that of a calm as stolid as is required of the soldier when in the presence of his superior. To such an one as he life is no more an affliction than it is to the turtle.

Then, there are those to whom life is the amusing dream of an hour, who flit through existence in loops of yellow light, who find pleasure in all things, and are careless of the morrow; and these, perhaps, above all others, are the most to be envied. It is such natures as theirs that are usually met with in ordinary fiction, and which are so singularly infrequent in real life. In fancy they are evoked with ease, and yet somehow they do not seem to bear the stamp which experience has set upon the real. That there are such natures it is, of course, absurd to deny, but to affirm that they are persistent types is scarcely in accordance with facts. There are, for instance, many young people who enter life with a prodigality of supposition which is certainly lavish; they see that others are smiling, and that life, even to its outskirts, presents an appearance of pleasing serenity. The supposition which they foster, that a percentage of happiness will be allotted to them, is then not unreasonable; on the contrary, it is very natural; but as far as the expectation goes, we are, most of us, very well aware that it holds its own but for a short space of time.

This fact, while self-evident, is not always satisfactorily explained; indeed, the reason why so many become disappointed with life is, perhaps, explainable only on psychological grounds. By all means the most important rôle throughout the entire length and breadth of humanity is that which is played by thought. Its influence is as noticeable in a bakeshop as in the overthrow of an empire; yet, in spite of the results which are constantly springing from it, it was Rousseau's opinion that "l'homme qui pense est un animal dépravé." Balzac caught at this theme, and wrung from it its most severe deductions.

To him it was a dissolvent of greater or less activity, according to the nature of the individual in whom it worked. Others have considered it to be the corrosive acid of existence, and the mainspring of every misfortune; all this it may or may not be, but that at least it is the prime factor of disenchantment is evidenced by such an every-day instance as that man, as a rule, and with but few exceptions, pictures in advance the pleasures and sensations which the future seems to hold, and yet when the pictured future becomes the actual present the disproportion between fact and fancy is so great that it results, in nine cases out of ten, in a complete insolvency. After one or more bankruptcies of this description the individual very generally finds that he has had enough, so to speak, and lets hope ever after alone, whereupon disillusionment steps in and takes its place.

It is thought, then, that does the mischief; or to be more exact, it is the inability to maintain an equilibrium between the real and the ideal; that is, in the majority of cases, the cause of disenchantment. To this it may be also added that it is because every one is so well organized for misfortune that such a small amount of open revolt is encountered. When it does appear, it is, as a rule, presented by such thinkers as have been mentioned in the course of these pages, who, through their assertion of the undeniable awake the dislike and animosity of those who have not yet had their fill of proceedings in bankruptcy, and still hope to find life a pleasant thing well worth the living.

It may be said in conclusion, and without any attempt at the discursive, that the moral atmosphere of the present century is charged with three distinct

disturbances,—the waning of religious belief, the insatiable demand for intense sensations, and the increasing number of those who live uncompanied, and walk abroad in solitude. That each of these three effects is due to one and the self-same cause is well-nigh unquestionable. The immense nausea that is spreading through all lands and literature is at work on the simple faith, the contented lives, and joyous good-fellowship of earlier days, and in its results it brings with it the signs and portents of a forthcoming though undetermined upheaval. Jean Paul said that we care for life, not because it is beautiful, but because we should care for it; whence follows the oft repeated yet hollow reasoning,—since we love life it must be beautiful; and it is from a series of deductions not dissimilar that the majority of those who are as yet unaffected by that which after all may be but a passing change still cling resolutely to the possibility of earthly happiness.

Out of a hundred intelligent Anglo-Saxons there are seldom two who think precisely alike on any given subject, be that subject what it may,—art, politics, literature, or religion. Indeed, there is but one faith common to all, and that is custom. It is not, however, customary to discuss a subject such as that which is treated in these pages; and it is, as a rule, considered just as bad form to question the value of life as it is to touch upon matters of an indelicate or repulsive nature.

It is, perhaps, for this latter reason, as also in view of the great difference of expressed opinion on all topics, that in England, and especially in America, so little is said on this subject, which for many years past has been of interest to the rest of the thinking world, and which each year is gaining in strength

and significance. What its final solution will be is, of course, uncertain. Schopenhauer recommended absolute chastity as the means to the great goal, and Hartmann has vaguely suggested a universal denial of the will to live; more recently, M. Renan has hazarded the supposition that in the advance of science some one might discover a force capable of blowing the planet to atoms, and which, if successfully handled, would, of course, annihilate pain. But these ideas, however practicable or impracticable they may be in the future, are for the moment merely theories; the world is not yet ripe for a supreme quietus, and in the mean time the worth of life may still be questioned.

The question, then, as to whether life is valuable, valueless, or an affliction can, with regard to the individual, be answered only after a consideration of the different circumstances attendant on each particular case; but, broadly speaking, and disregarding its necessary exceptions, life may be said to be always valuable to the obtuse, often valueless to the sensitive; while to him who commiserates with all mankind, and sympathizes with everything that is, life never appears otherwise than as an immense and terrible affliction.

FOOTNOTES:

[10] *Zur Philosophie der Geschichte, u. s. w.* Carl Duncker, Berlin; also *Das Tragische als Weltgesetz, u. s. w.* Lauenburg.

[11] An admirable translation (the work of Professor Charles Carroll, of New York) of this romance appeared a few years ago in *Harper's Monthly*.

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Transcriber's Notes

Pages 50-51: Changed "othwise" to "otherwise."
(although the common herd think oth-[end of page] wise,)

Page 65: Retained "Vossiche," but possibly a typo for "Vossische."
(Lindner, the editor of the "Vossiche Zeitung,")

Page 164: Changed "fastastic" to "fantastic."
(to the average German must seem fastastic,)

Page 176: Changed "negaitve" to "negative."
(the purely negaitve character of pleasure.)

Page 231: Retained "uncompanied," but possibly a typo for "unaccompanied."
(increasing number of those who live uncompanied,)

Ad Page 5: Added [?] to missing price.
(O. B. Frothingham. Life of W. H. Channing. Cr. 8vo, $)

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